

# *Zary –* *The City*

*of Georg Philipp Telemann*

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## ABSTRACT

The paper discusses Georg Philipp Telemann's presence in Sorau (now Żary in Poland) in 1704–1708, inspirations from Polish folk music in Telemann's works, as well as projects undertaken by and in the present-day city of Żary with a view to incorporating and commemorating Telemann's figure and oeuvre in the city's contemporary culture.

**Keywords:** Georg Philipp Telemann, Żary (Sorau), local culture, inspirations from Polish folk music

The musical culture of a city or town draws on motifs, ideas, phenomena, and figures of local heritage, rooted in various ethnic, national, confessional, societal, artistic, industrial, and other traditions. Remembering persons, and artists in particular, who were associated with the given urban centre in the past, is one of the most distinct and impactful components of such cultures. These persons may be related to the city by birth, place of death or burial, through their stays in or passage through the city, or because some of the city's inhabitants are referred to in their oeuvre, etc.

Locally active artists representing various disciplines may bestow specific orientations on contemporary urban cultures. They become a major, and sometimes the only clear and distinctive element of the given place's self-identification. Symbolic gestures (such as naming streets and institutions after them, or events held by the municipal authorities, institutions, and organisations) turn those artists into an element of the local culture's self-image, which sometimes actually allows the local community to crystallize around those figures and thus forge their local identity.

Among such locally meaningful artists, there are many music composers. Numerous cities self-identify with a given composer and are perceived as associated with that person by outsiders on the principle of feedback (that is, a city is identified with a given artist and vice versa). Regularities may be observed here: The smaller the given town (or the fewer eminent figures have been associated with it), the more intensely it exploits its links to the given artist, who may frequently be the only major figure in the local urban tradition. On the other hand, the more recognisable the given artist is in the national and international scenes, the more crucial he or she becomes to the city's self-image. All these interdependencies are also at work in the case of Georg Philipp Telemann and the city of Żary.

## TELEMANN IN ŻARY. THE CITY IN HIS TIMES

The composer arrived in Żary (Germ. Sorau) in September 1704 at the invitation of Erdmann II, Count von Promnitz, who served as courtier to Augustus II the Strong, elector of Saxony and king of Poland. Telemann became head of the court ensemble (*Hofkapellmeister*), court composer and organist at the Count's court chapel (succeeding Wolfgang Caspar Printz in this position). Telemann was twenty-three on his arrival in Żary and had already obtained a diploma in law from Leipzig University. He also had considerable musical experience gained as, among others, conductor of the Leipzig Collegium Musicum and author of music for St Thomas and St Nicholas Churches in Leipzig. The composer resided in Żary uninterruptedly until the mid-1706, when he set out for Pszczyna, Warsaw, and Cracow with the Promnitz court. He also visited Berlin three times as the Count's courtier. Early in 1708 he returned to Żary, but in the autumn of the same year he eventually left that city to take up the post of conductor and Kapellmeister at the court of Johann Wilhelm von Sachsen in Eisenach. Telemann would visit Żary once more. While serving in Eisenach, he obtained permission to travel to that city for his wedding to Count Erdmann II's maidservant, Amalia Luiza Juliane Eberlin (met back in 1706), whom he married on 13 October 1709 at the Promnitz castle chapel.

What was Żary like when Telemann lived there? In the first half of the eighteenth century, it was part of a 'free state country' (Germ. *Freie Standesherrschaft*) of Żary and Trzebiel (Germ. Triebel). The city had approximately four thousand inhabitants and was a major trade centre on the salt route, as well as a hub of the textile industry and of multifaceted craftsmanship. Żary lay on the Polish-Saxon royal post route connecting Warsaw and Dresden and a Saxon cuirassier garrison (ca 150 cavalrymen) was stationed there. The Promnitz family, who owned the city, consistently contributed to its flourishing and development. Their court was also splendid and sumptuous, with an art gallery, a permanent ensemble, and guest performances by Italian and French opera-and-ballet companies. It ranked among the finest aristocratic Saxon courts and was attractive as such to the young composer. His decision to accept the post was also certainly facilitated by Erdmann II's musical interests. In his autobiography, Telemann comments: 'The splendid

character of this court [...] moved me to undertake enterprising projects enthusiastically, particularly with regard to instrumental pieces'.<sup>1</sup> It thus seems that Telemann's employment in Żary was the result of both the Count's expectations concerning the young composer's talent and potential and of Telemann's explicit hope that the post would provide him with opportunities for multifaceted musical work. In his 1718 *Lebens-Lauff* sent to Mattheson, he reflected from the perspective of more than a dozen years later:

If there is something in the world that encourages the human spirit to become ever more competent in whatever craft they may have learnt – it is likely the court. [...] Therefore when, in my best prime years, I entered that court, one can easily imagine that I had no intention to sit idle [but I undertook] to build my happiness.<sup>2</sup>

Karol Bula thus characterises Telemann's time at the Promnitz court: 'It was in Żary, one must assume, that the foundations of his decidedly innovative style eventually took shape';<sup>3</sup> 'this was arguably the Sturm-und-Drang period in Telemann's life'.<sup>4</sup> One special dimension of Telemann's association with the Żary court results from the fact that his music from that time catered for that court's life and needs, which makes it possible to reconstruct both the repertoire and the atmosphere of the Promnitz castle in that era. Bohdan Pociąg writes that the value of Telemann's music

lies first and foremost in the fact that, like no other music preserved from that time, it reflects the then culture and life of the social environments for which it was composed. It thus becomes a precious and sumptuous source of historical knowledge [...] One could say

that Telemann's output is a direct outgrowth from the soil of that time's music life, its excellent artistic generalisation and crowning point [...] [Telemann's] works preserved what is by its nature the most ephemeral, elusive, fragile, and perishable: the everyday life of the age as reflected in its artistic culture.<sup>5</sup>

## TELEMANN AND POLISH FOLK MUSIC

Telemann's employment and residence in Żary would by itself have made this artist important to the local community's identity.<sup>6</sup> He stayed there as a young artist, before he became one of the greatest composers of his age. His later fame shines, so to speak, on the city's local community with its reflected splendour. Telemann's links with the local population were, however, of a deeper nature, as he developed an interest in the region's folk music and used its elements in his own compositions. This situates his relation to the local Żary culture in a different, more 'material' and palpable space. While discussing his activity in Żary, we must therefore take his own music into account.

In this context one should quote Telemann's statement on Polish folk music, which proves his acquaintance and fascination with this repertoire. In his 1718 letter to Johann Mattheson, he wrote about his stay in Żary: 'Thanks to the neighbourhood [I became] acquainted with Polish music, in which, I must admit, I found many good and varied things, which served me later in many projects, including serious ones.'<sup>7</sup> In the *Lebens-Lauff*, he elaborates in his subject:

When the court moved for half a year to Plesse [now Pszczyna – translator's note] [...] I learned there first hand, as in Cracow, the Polish and Hanak [Moravian] music in its genuine barbaric beauty [...] It is hard to believe what wonderful ideas such bagpipe players and fiddlers can have when they begin to fantasise during breaks between the dances. An attentive [listener] could pick up enough

1 'Das glänzende Wesen dieses auf fürstlichem Fuß neu-eingerichtete Hofes munterte mich zu feurigen Unternehmungen auf, besonders in Instrumentalsachen [...]' Georg Philipp Telemann, *Lebens-Lauff mein Georg Philipp Telemanns; Entworfen in Franckfurth am Mäyn* [Autobiographie 1718], <http://www.zeno.org/Kulturgeschichte/M/Telemann,+Georg+Philipp/Autobiographie+1718>, accessed 5 Dec. 2023. English version quoted after: Georg Philipp Telemann, *His Autobiography*, tr. Thomas Braatz, 2009, 9, <https://www.bach-cantatas.com/Other/TelemannEPMattheson.pdf>, accessed 5 Dec. 2023.

2 'Ist etwas in der Welt / wodurch der Geist des Menschen aufgemuntert wird / sich in dem / was er gelernt / immer geschickter zu machen / so wird es wohl der Hoff seyn. [...] Wie ich nun in der besten Blüthe meiner Jahre an diesen Hoff gerieth / so ist leicht zu erachten / daß ich die Hände nicht werde in den Schooß gelegt haben / um mein Glück zu bauen.' Georg Philipp Telemann, *Lebens-Lauff mein...*, accessed 5 Dec. 2023. All the English translations are mine unless stated otherwise.

3 Karol R. Bula, *Telemann* (Kraków, 2021), 37–38.

4 Bula, *Telemann*, 43.

5 Bohdan Pociąg, 'Muzyka jako źródło poznania' ['Music as a Source of Knowledge'], in Georg Philipp Telemann, *Autobiografia z roku 1740* [The 1740 Autobiography], tr. Jerzy Prokopiuk (Pszczyna, 1983), 5, 7.

6 There is no evidence for Telemann's possible contributions to Żary's urban (burgher) music life, similar to his public concerts held with the Collegium Musicum in Leipzig (1702). This may have been due to the fact that his work at the Promnitz court was as absorbing as it was multidimensional.

7 'Wegen der Nachbarschaft mit der Polnischen Musik bekannt, wovon gesteh, dass ich viel Gutes und veränderlichen darbey gefunden, welches mir nachgehendes in anche nauch ernsthaften Sachen Dienste gethan.' Georg Philipp Telemann, *Autobiografie, Autobiographien 1718, 1729, 1740* (Pszczyna, 1994), 16.

concepts from them in eight days to serve one for an entire lifetime. [...] Afterwards I wrote various grand concertos and trios in this style, which I clothed [...] in Italian garments.<sup>8</sup>

This passage demonstrates Telemann's openness to folk music and its adaptability as an inspiration for his original works, as well as his awareness of its intrinsic value. In a quatrain penned by Telemann, he expresses his conviction that 'Polish music need not be wooden at all.' (literally 'be [made] of wood')<sup>9</sup> These are the words of a musician and composer who recognised and appreciated the potential of folk music. Considering this stance, it was only natural that he made Polish folk music into a source of inspiration for his own works. This was already noticed by his contemporaries, In *Musicalisches Wörterbuch* (Leipzig 1749), Johannes Stössel claims that Telemann initially leaned towards the Polish, and later to the French and Italian styles in his works, and that he first came in contact with Polish music at the castle of Count von Promnitz in Żary.<sup>10</sup>

The topic of the presence of Polish folk music as an inspiration in Telemann's oeuvre has been taken up by many scholars. Let me only quote the conclusions from some analyses. In her study of *Partie polonoise in B*, Krystyna Wilkowska-Chomińska expresses her conviction that Polish musical qualities (such as mazurka rhythms and repeated phrases) can also be found in those suite movements that do not directly demonstrate Polish elements. This is related to the concept of 'Polish style' in eighteenth-century German German aesthetics, where it was viewed as cheerful, lively, and satirical (Johann Adolf Scheibe, *Critischer Musicus*, Leipzig 1745). Wilkowska-

Chomińska thus considers the *Suite* as 'an example of the Polish musical style as practised in accordance with German aesthetic views.'<sup>11</sup> Zofia Stęszewska points to a rather deeper understanding of the concept of Polish music. She situates Telemann's Polish inspirations in the context of other Poland-related pieces from that age, which she describes as

the earliest European dances and tunes that transmit [to us] the autonomous, distinctive rhythmic qualities of Polish music, that is, primarily the qualities of national dances: the mazurka and the polonaise. They constitute a still insufficiently researched sources for the study of Polish musical culture, including, apparently, also Polish musical folklore.<sup>12</sup>

Analyses of Telemann's forty-four works with the word 'Polish' in their titles lead Stęszewska to claim that those labelled as polonaises indeed belong to this genre, whereas other movements in his 'Polish' works are mazurka- and oberek-like in character. The diversity of Telemann's treatment of rhythm and melody in the polonaises proves, according to that scholar, that he was emulating a living dance tradition that he was familiar with. This is further corroborated by rhythmic, melodic, and formal parallels between Telemann's pieces and Silesian folk music.<sup>13</sup> Polish rhythms and melodies are present throughout that composer's output. Stęszewska argues that for this reason 'Telemann's oeuvre is not only of great importance to the history of German music but is also a major [...] source of information about Polish folk music, Polish dances from the first half of the eighteenth century, and indirectly even earlier ones from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.'<sup>14</sup>

There are recurrent motifs in those studies. Drawing directly on living tradition, Telemann was able accurately to grasp the qualities of Polish dances, which means that his music offers credible insights into the then Polish folk practice. Polish qualities were not a mere ornament in his music or a prominent exotic stylisation. They were, instead, a lasting component of his style (also present

**8** 'Als der Hof sich ein halbes Jahr lang nach Plesse [...] begab, lernete ich so wohl daselbst, als in Krakau, die polnische und hanakische Musik, in ihrer wahren barbarischen Schönheit kennen. [...] Man sollte kaum glauben, was dergleichen Bockpfeiffer oder Geiger für wunderbare Einfälle haben, wenn sie, so oft die Tanzenden ruhen, fantaisiren. Ein Aufmerckender könnte von ihnen, in 8. Tagen, Gedancken für ein ganzes Leben erschnappen. [...] Ich habe, nach der Zeit, verschiedene grosse Concerte und Trii in dieser Art geschrieben, die ich in einen italiänischen Rock, mit abgewechselten Adagi und Allegri, eingekleidet.' Telemann, *Lebens-Lauff mein...*

**9** Es lob ein jeder sonst das / was ihn kann erfreun, / Nun bringt ein Polnisch Lied die gantze Welt zum springen; / So brauch ich keine Müh den Schluss heraus zu bringen: / Die Polnische Musik muss nicht von Holtze seyn. 'Everyone praises what can bring him joy. / Now a Polish song makes the whole world dance, / So it won't be hard to draw a conclusion: / Polish music need not be wooden at all.' Telemann, *Autobiografie...*, 16.

**10** Johannes Stössel, *Musicalisches Wörterbuch* (Leipzig, 1749).

**11** Krystyna Wilkowska-Chomińska, 'Suiita Polska Telemanna' ['Telemann's Polish Suite'], *Muzyka*, 2 (1959), 57–64.

**12** Zofia Stęszewska, 'Polonika w źródłach muzycznych pochodzenia niemieckiego i w twórczości kompozytorów niemieckich od XVI do początków XVIII wieku' ['Poland-Related Musical Pieces in German Sources and the Works of German Composers between the Sixteenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries'], *Muzyka*, 3 (1977), 97.

**13** Zofia Stęszewska, 'Elementy polskie w twórczości Telemanna' ['Polish Elements in Telemann's Music'], *Muzyka*, 3–4 (1981), 81.

**14** Stęszewska, 'Elementy polskie...', 82.

in works that do not contain a 'Polish' element in their titles).<sup>15</sup> This is important for the perception of Telemann in the local community, as the presence of Polish folk elements in his music integrally connects him with the local culture, and since those qualities are present throughout his oeuvre, the (local) Polish folk music becomes an indispensable point of reference for the interpretation of his works.

### THE COMPOSER'S COMMEMORATION IN ŻARY

In the later eighteenth and especially nineteenth century, the oeuvre and person of Georg Philipp Telemann were eclipsed by those of Johann Sebastian Bach and George Frideric Handel. It was only the twentieth century, and its second half in particular, that brought a Telemann revival. The bicentenary of his death, celebrated in 1967, was an important point in this process. The situation was similar on the local level in Żary. Whether his music had been performed there in the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries remains a subject for further research. What we can say, for instance when looking through a collection of one hundred postcards from Żary dated 1896–1945,<sup>16</sup> is that there is no evidence of the composer's presence in the public urban space. Despite the numerous representations of the Biberstein castle and the Promnitz palace (represented on virtually all the multi-image postcards), there are no references to Telemann in that set. The represented monuments only include figures associated with the history of united Germany: the emperors Wilhelm and Friedrich together (1919), Otto von Bismarck (1889), and Helmut von Moltke (1902). No street in Żary bore Telemann's name even though there were streets dedicated to locally active personages. After 1918, 'streets were marked out whose patrons were local figures meritorious to the city's development, particularly in the area of economy'.<sup>17</sup> Other streets bore the names of historians Johann Samuel Magnus (1678–

1707)<sup>18</sup> and Johann Gottlob Worbs (1760–1833), the philologist Michael Neander (de Sorau) (1525–1595), and Erdmann Neumeister (1671–1756). The latter was active in Żary at the same times as Telemann. In 1705–12 he was a preacher at the Promnitz court and the priest at the head of the city's St Mary's parish. Importantly, he authored new versions of cantata libretti which Telemann set to music.<sup>19</sup>

After the incorporation of Żary into Poland in 1945, the composer remained absent from the local cultural scene. Despite, or rather because of the new political circumstances, Telemann could not make his way into the city's public space. Polish guidebooks and historical studies dedicated to cities and towns in the so-called 'Regained Territories' either failed to mention or quite marginalised the history of that area before 1945. For obvious reasons, such policies affected the local communities particularly strongly. Their prewar cultural past was highly complex and diversified, so that a purely Polish perspective, ignoring the other, national or ethnic traditions, was difficult to adopt. With reference to the local environment, this meant that earlier research traditions were discontinued.<sup>20</sup>

Telemann's memory was only revived in the city's public space in the 1990s. This was made possible by the new social and political situation after 1989 and the new social realities, in which the concept of localness was being redefined. The establishment of real, not nominal local governments created an atmosphere in which the local identity and autonomy was being restored to social awareness in public space and (based on the reform of local government) – within the structures of the Polish state. This opened up a space for new perspectives on

**15** Cf. Gunther Fleischhauer, 'Einflüsse polnischer Musik im Schaffen Georg Phillip Telemanns', *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Universität Halle*, 3 (1976), 77.

**16** [n.n.] *Żary na dawnej pocztówce [Żary in Old Postcards]* [no editorial data] (Żary, 1998).

**17** Tomasz Jaworski and Rafał Szymczak, eds, *Atlas historyczny ziemi żarskiej [A Historical Atlas of the Żary Region]* (Zielona Góra, 2013), 92.

**18** Dorota Starosta, 'Johann Samuel Magnus (1678–1707) – kronikarz Ziemi Żarskiej' ['Johann Samuel Magnus (1678–1707) – A Chronicler of the Żary Region'], *Rocznik Lubuski*, XXVIII/I (2002), 212–215.

**19** Neumeister also acted as godfather to the composer's daughter, Maria Wilhelmine Eleonore.

**20** Cf. Stanisław Alexandrowicz, 'Różne pojęcie historii regionalnej i możliwości jej uprawiania' ['Different Concepts of Regional Culture and Ways of Its Cultivation'], in *Region, regionalizm – pojęcia i rzeczywistość [Region and Regionalism: Concepts vs Reality]*, Kwiryna Handke, ed. (Warszawa, 1993), 39–40, 43. This phenomenon also affected material culture: 'A great number of tombstones have been destroyed in Land Lebus following the war [World War II] under the false pretence that everything "German" ought to be annihilated. This was a huge mistake [...].' Michał Sczaniecki, Władysław Korcz, *Dzieje Ziemi Lubuskiej w wypisach [A Land Lebus History Reader]* (Warszawa, 1960), 106.



localness: reviving local traditions, embarking on local initiatives, and building local communities.

This re-establishment of the city's local identity incorporated the figure of Telemann into a new sphere of reception – that related to local culture. Telemann's years of service in Żary provides a reason and incentive for numerous projects undertaken by the local community. In combination with the composer's status in the history of music, this has created a space for the restoration and cultivation of his works' regular presence in local culture.

Probably the first spectacular example of public debate concerning Telemann's place in urban space concerned the proposals to name a street as well as the city's First-Level State Music School after the composer. His restoration to local culture was symbolically inaugurated by a concert held in Żary by the 'Amadeus' Chamber Orchestra of Polish Radio under Agnieszka Duczmal on 4 December 1999. This was coupled with the premiere of the Orchestra's album titled *Georg Philipp Telemann in Żary* (1999), dedicated to the composer's music. Local publications from that time (in Polish) include the already mentioned *Żary in Old Postcards* (Żary 1998), *Żarskie legendy* [*Legends of Żary*] (1998),<sup>21</sup> *Żary* (1996), and *Georg Philipp Telemann w Żarach* [*Georg Philipp Telemann in Żary*] (Żary, [1998]).

From the earliest years under the new political system, the municipal authorities were actively involved in the promotion of Telemann. This included incorporating him into the city's image and public space as the patron of a street,<sup>22</sup> a 'Telemann bench' in the main square (with a sculpture of the composer playing the violin),<sup>23</sup> and a section (tab) 'Telemann in Żary' added to the city council's website (telemann.com.pl), whose heading announces: 'Żary – The City of Telemann'. The tab provides access to extensive materials on such subjects as 'Georg Philipp Telemann in Żary', 'Telemann and Neumeister', 'Telemann's Wedding in Żary', 'Georg Philipp Telemann as Court Kapellmeister in Żary', 'The

Impact of Telemann's Work on Silesian Musicians and Composers', 'Telemann at the Promnitz Court in Żary', and 'A Virtual City Walk in the Footsteps of Georg Philipp Telemann'.

Telemann has also become part of the Biberstein castle renovation and adaptation project ('The Castle – International Centre of Culture and Traditions'). The Centre's cultural functions have been described as follows:

It is intended to focus in particular on the promotion of Georg Philipp Telemann's period of residence in Żary (1704–08), of his music compositions, as well as the cultivation of musical collaborations between Polish and German borderland schools, and with European cities in which Telemann lived. Two large rooms on the ground floor and first floor of the castle [...] will serve as venues for chamber music concerts, conferences, meetings, and exhibitions, dedicated mainly to Telemann. The Large Hall is to bear the name of G.Ph. Telemann. One of its antechambers will house a permanent exhibition and a small Telemann-dedicated library.<sup>24</sup>

On 6 February 2023, the City of Żary signed a contract for a design study titled 'Adaptation of the Castle Ruins for a Centre of Culture and Traditions'.

To date, the city's authorities and institutions (primarily the Żary Cultural Centre) have carried out the following projects: signing an agreement with Magdeburg (the composer's home city), as well as organisation of events dedicated to Telemann's music, including a concert marking the tricentenary of his departure from Żary (2008), a staged reconstruction of his wedding at the Church of Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Żary-Kunice (Germ. Kunzendorf, 2017), the first concert in the Promnitz palace courtyard held in contemporary times (2018), a staged tricentenary reconstruction of King Augustus II's visit to Żary (2019), a production in the palace courtyard of Telemann's opera *Pimpinone* (by Kraków Chamber Opera in 2019), as well as a concert cycle under the telling title 'Our Telemann', which affirms the local community's self-identification with this historical figure.

Another institution active in the area of promoting Telemann's music, the Georg Philipp Telemann First-Level State Music School, was formally named after the composer in 2000 (as the only school of this type in Poland), which connects the school's activity with this figure. The very act of choosing Telemann over another then proposed candidate, an eminent Polish composer not related in any way to this city or region, was a manifestation of awareness of Żary's local identity and of

<sup>21</sup> In the Preface, Ireneusz Brzeziński writes: 'I am convinced that [the legends of Żary] will help build our sense of homeland (the Żary region) and belonging'. Ireneusz Brzeziński, ed. and coll., *Żarskie legendy* (Żary, 1998), 5.

<sup>22</sup> Telemann Street is located in the western part of the city, in the so-called 'district of composers', where there are also streets bearing the names of Moniuszko, Chopin, Wieniawski, Kurpiński, Szymanowski, Nowowiejski, Paderewski, and Lutosławski.

<sup>23</sup> The bench with a sculpture of the composer (designed by Marek Szala and Kazimierz Polak) was unveiled in Żary's main square on 17 April 2010, to mark the 750<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the city's foundation.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. poster exhibition in Żary's main square titled 'Plan for the Castle's Adaptation', prepared by Ireneusz Brzeziński (2021).

Telemann's importance for the local culture. Telemann's role as the school's patron thus became a major stepping stone towards building a local musical culture.

The school collaborates (since 2000) with the Konservatorium Georg Philipp Telemann Magdeburg, with which it signed a partnership (2005) for the promotion of Telemann and his music as well as joint artistic and educational projects. The Telemann Music School in Żary also co-organises a Telemann Festival, Polish-German Musical Camps, Polish-German Competitions for String and Flute Chamber Ensembles, workshops conducted by the Polish-German Chamber Orchestra, and annual 'Summer with Telemann' festivals. A Telemann museum is to be created. A number of activities related to this composer have also been undertaken by associations: Żarski Zamek (Żary Castle) and Region Łużyce (Lusatia Region).

Local culture-related entities are intensely involved in cultivating Telemann's presence in that culture. This has resulted in consistent and multifaceted activity that has already been part and parcel of the city's life for a quarter of a century. Telemann has thus become a major figure in local culture, and an element of the city's image and identity. His historical presence is reflected in contemporary urban space in many dimensions: material (the Telemann bench, a memorial plaque), symbolic (concerts of his music, spectacles, CD releases, the music school and street of his name), as well as research and publications (studies, promotional materials, popularising prints, lectures, online materials, and educational events).

Activities related to Telemann are thus numerous and wide-ranging. Has this led the city's inhabitants to identify with this figure? Has Żary indeed been established in their perception as 'the city of Telemann'? The subject of Telemann's recognisability among the local population was researched by Kornela Szczepańska in her MA thesis,<sup>25</sup> which offers us some insight into this matter. Conducted in February and March 2018 in the form of a questionnaire on a sample of sixty-four respondents, the study reveals that 44% of them could correctly identify Telemann as a composer, musician, conductor, or violinist; 75% knew that he was the patron of the local music school; the vast majority correctly

defined his links to the city (his stay in Żary, composing music and directing the court ensemble); 56% were able correctly to locate Telemann in the Baroque era; 61% saw Telemann as part and parcel of the city's culture. A smaller proportion of respondents attended concerts of Telemann's music held in Żary: 26% just once, though as many as 57% knew that such events were organised. This study shows, nevertheless, that the city's inhabitants recognise the figure of Georg Philipp Telemann and his place in local history, as well as his significance for the city, even if they attend concerts of his music rather more rarely.<sup>26</sup>

### TELEMANN'S ŻARY AS A CASE STUDY OF ATTITUDES TO LOCAL CULTURAL HERITAGE

Several issues related to Żary, its history and geopolitical position as related to Telemann's status and the contemporary functioning of culture can be brought up in the above-discussed context.

With regard to the relation between the city and the composer, it is related to the issue of local heritage versus national culture. Żary is situated in the overlap area between many different 'borderlands'. For this reason, its heritage is particularly complex and diverse from the ethnic, national, confessional, political, etc. perspectives.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>26</sup> For comparison, research in Magdeburg (an online survey conducted between December 2019 and April 2020) shows that 100% respondents know who Telemann was, correctly associate him with music, his professions, Magdeburg as his birthplace, and himself as the patron of the city's Conservatory. 87.5% attended concerts of Telemann's music. The same proportion of respondents saw the composer as a lasting element of the city's culture.

<sup>27</sup> Even a cursory glance at cultural influences, migrations, and state or cultural affiliations of Sorau / Żory and the region of Lusatia from the sixth century and the oldest archaeological finds onwards demonstrates the area's complex 'mosaic' character typical of borderlands (cf. Jaworski and Szymczak, *Atlas historyczny...*, 10, 47–112). Żary lies in the territories of the Slavic Dadoesani tribe, incorporated into Poland in 1018. The city was founded in 1260 with Magdeburg rights granted to it in the charter. Historically it was situated in the Silesian-Lusatian borderland between Polish, German, and Czech lands, and as such it belonged to local Silesian rulers from the Piast dynasty (till 1364), then the Czech kings (till 1635) Saxon electors (till 1815), later – Prussia, the German Empire, and the Third Reich (till 1945). The city's owners included the Dewin, Pack, Biberstein, and Promnitz families. The latter owned it from its purchase by Wrocław-Breslau bishop Baltazar von Promnitz in 1558 until 1765. Cf. Piotr Haracz, 'Ziemia żarska w średniowieczu' ['The Żary Region in the Middle Ages'], in *Atlas historyczny...*, 49.

<sup>25</sup> Kornela Szczepańska, 'Współczesny obraz G.Ph. Telemanna w środowiskach jego pobytów (Magdeburg-Żary-Pszczyna)' ['The Contemporary Image of G.Ph. Telemann in Places of His Residence (Magdeburg-Żary-Pszczyna)'], MA thesis supervised by Prof. Rafał Ciesielski, PhD, Habil., Institute of Music, University of Zielona Góra, 2020.

Its heritage is unique as an amalgam of many cultural orientations of varied provenance, a specific combination of different traditions, whose interrelations and proportions define its separate, individual character.

On the other hand, the demographics and migrations to and from the so-called 'Regained Territories' must be taken into account. In 1945–1950 Żary was settled by various Polish-language groups, including people who had been doing forced labour in the Third Reich, migrants from various parts of the pre-war Polish state, mostly central and Greater Poland (12,836 persons) as well as the so-called 'returned expatriates' forced to leave their homeland (including from Czechoslovakia and Romania – 3,147 persons).<sup>28</sup> 598 others arrived from what was then the Soviet Union in 1956–1960. These groups were internally diversified as far as nationality and ethnicity are concerned (for instance, 3,5 thousand persons of Jewish nationality arrived after 1945). There were 16,3 thousand inhabitants in 1950, 19,7 thousand in 1955, and 25,0 thousand in 1960. In conjunction with the migration data cited above, this reflects the scale of population replacement in the city.<sup>29</sup> This mixed community then began to integrate. Tomasz Jaworski writes: 'In the 1950s, there were still national and social distinctions [...] Later years brought the integration of all those settlers from various parts of Poland, which resulted in the emergence of the modern society of Eastern Lusatia.'<sup>30</sup> An experience common to all the newcomers was that of the area being completely foreign to them, also with respect to its local heritage. With social integration came a recognition and assimilation into the new reality. People began to grow roots, and successive generations established a growing sense of connection to the local area and its traditions.

This historical and continuing presence of varied traditions and orientations in the local community is essential to an understanding of local identity and must be taken into account whenever we discuss the current

formula of local culture in the given period. It constitutes the very nature of that culture. By looking at it through the prism of localness as the key criterion for defining traditions and describing the contemporary profiling of local culture, we are able to approach that culture from a relatively autonomous perspective and take all of its products into account, regardless of their provenance or country affiliations. Local heritage does not 'notice' these affiliations, so to speak, since they polarise that heritage as a kind of centrifugal force capable of breaking the continuity of local culture. Local heritage and identity form, in a sense, outside and above big politics and largely independently from the latter. A strong local community drawing on its own heritage and willing to build its own identity to an extent necessary for its functioning can develop a partial immunity to the 'whirlwinds of history'. By adopting such an approach, we prevent a provisional treatment of local cultures, that is, attitudes depending on, and constantly redefined by, the changing political, ethnic, confessional, and social situation. Continuity is a crucial aspect of local culture. Many such cultures derive their character from the coexistence and interaction in their history of multiple and varied traditions. Once we focus on what is local, these traditions acquire primacy and their status therefore changes.

The diversity of local culture means that, from the perspective of specific national traditions, the individual ingredients of local heritage are (or may often be) mutually 'foreign' to one another. Thus, the figure of Telemann belongs to German culture and is as such foreign to Polish culture. Within the local culture however, he functions on a par with other elements as an integral part of its heritage. With reference to components of local cultures, it is in fact difficult to consider 'foreignness' or alienness as a category. All such ingredients are local and their own, which results from the very nature of such cultures, which in a way abolish and preclude the absolute supremacy and exclusive character of any single component (for instance, that of national culture and the state apparatus that supports it). Local culture, therefore, is (or should be) characterised by its 'exterritorial' status with reference to national cultures, dominant denominations, and ethnic majorities. Elements of different cultures may thus coexist on an equal footing within a local culture as its integral parts. This is especially true of the given local culture's complex history resulting in its (naturally) multicultural character. The case of Telemann exemplifies both a strong sense of localness and a distance to historically rooted ideologies that marginalise the value and sense of local identity. The choice of Telemann as a patron for a street and a music school was

**28** Hanna Kurowska, 'Ludność Żar' ['The Population of Żary'], in *Atlas historyczny...*, 136–139.

**29** Bolesław Poprawa, 'Rozwój miast i wzrost liczby ludności województwa zielonogórskiego w latach 1946–1968 i w najbliższej przyszłości' ['The Growth of Cities and Population in the Zielona Góra Province, 1946–68 and in the Nearest Future'], in *Ze studiów nad miejską siecią osadniczą województwa zielonogórskiego* [Studies on the Urban Settlement Network in the Zielona Góra Province], Lubuskie Towarzystwo Naukowe, XVI (2) (Zielona Góra, 1974), 18.

**30** Tomasz Jaworski, '1000 lat ziemi żarskiej' ['A Thousand Years of the Żary Region'], in *Atlas historyczny...*, 9.



accompanied by a debate. Doubts were expressed, and arguments related to local traditions clashed with the nationwide, Polish perspective. These decisions, taken in the late 1990s, reflect wider transformations in the Polish identity and attitudes to local culture.

The diversified local heritage present in contemporary local cultures can also be taken into account when discussing contemporary culture at large. Local culture mediates elements of that heritage. This is also true of music which, as an ingredient of local culture, becomes a part of contemporary (including mass) musical culture, frequently positioning itself (as in the case of Telemann) as an alternative to mass culture. In such instances, local culture becomes a kind of 'wormhole' through which elements of other cultures penetrate into general culture owing to their local presence. It is through the mediacy of local culture, of its heritage, that elements of other cultures can make a natural appearance in Polish culture. For example, a 'Telemann bench' is a natural presence in Żary, but there are no grounds for erecting one in Warsaw.

Telemann's contemporary presence in Żary is thus an example of a culture-forming approach to such instances, in which the local culture is enriched through the study and incorporation of the composer's links to the place into a 'new' inclusively conceived local identity. By this process, elements of supralocal (European and global) culture make their way into local cultural reality. Telemann's place in Żary's local culture depends, in fact, on a mutual relation: The universal makes its presence in the local and the local is incorporated into the universal. Telemann's music can be considered as representing European art. It also attains, to an extent, a universal dimension within that continental sphere. The presence of Polish folk music elements in his works is, conversely, a manifestation of localness on the universal level. This process is enhanced by the very nature of music as a medium characterised by an open (universal?) manner of perception, as well as a strong expressive, emotional, aesthetic interpretative, and performance-related potential. Music is a medium that can sublimate local elements.

Despite the numerous decisions and projects carried out in the last quarter of a century, the presence of Telemann and his music in Żary still appears to represent an open process with broad prospects for development, correlated most likely with that other process of the composer being rediscovered and reintegrated into contemporary European culture in its various areas such as concert programmes, music releases, and academic research.

Today's Żary, however, is already quite justified in identifying itself as 'the city of Telemann'. The process of incorporating him into current cultural practice and of reinforcing his presence in the city's musical life as well as his recognition on the national and international scale could perhaps be facilitated by launching a project imitating the already well-tested festival formula: 'Telemann and His Europe'.

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