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## **An early 20th-century Kraków vaudeville by Krumłowski: a cultural transfer or an expression of local traditions?**

At the turn of the twentieth century, the vaudeville traditions were embraced in Kraków by Konstanty Krumłowski (1872–1938)—a well-known and liked author of satirical texts. His plays, complete with dances and short songs written by various—more or less recognized composers—were very popular in Kraków. The phenomenon of the genre may be considered from two perspectives: as an example of cultural transfer of Viennese traditions, oriented toward operetta performances, or as an instance of cultivating local themes. The first approach focuses on the very genre of vaudeville, and concerns the influence of Vienna over the musical life in Kraków which, at that time, was a part of Austro-Hungarian Empire. The second approach concentrates on the content of Krumłowski's vaudevilles and is an attempt to find out whether local themes are present in his musically illustrated acts.

### **1.**

The end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century mark the peak of operetta's popularity in Vienna, attributed to the success of Johann Strauss, Jr.'s works. This is the time when the golden age of Viennese operetta<sup>1</sup>—apart from J. Strauss', the works of Carl Zeller (1842–1898) or Franz von

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<sup>1</sup> Richard TRAUBNER, *Operetta. A Theatrical History*, New York and London 2003: 103–131.

Suppé (1819–1895) were also performed—turns into the silver age.<sup>2</sup> Operettas by Imre Kálmán (1882–1953), Franz Lehár (1870–1948), Leo Fall (1873–1925), Edmund Eysler (1874–1949), Oskar Nedbal (1874–1930) and many more were a great success in Vienna. Even though operetta did not originate in Vienna, but in Paris, it enjoyed unbelievable popularity there. As commonly known, music historians link the very beginnings of operetta with the work of Jacques Offenbach (1819–1880), who put opéra bouffe on the path towards operetta, a genre filled with dancing and humor.<sup>3</sup> However, also in Vienna similar forms intended for stage performances such as vaudevilles, farces, were produced. Especially vaudeville was recognized in European culture as a form of urban entertainment, with elements of fun.

Since feudal times townsmen would choose the heart of the town as the main place for their entertainment. As Wiktor Gusiew writes ‘there are a lot of pictures with market squares portrayed not only as an architectural compound, but also as a centre of urban living. The market place was a heart of a town: a market square and an administrative centre at the same time, from which streets would run radially [...] And it was here, in a bit of shade, where the massive crowd would swarm, where screaming and laughter could be heard, where jugglers performed’.<sup>4</sup> Entertainment was provided by travelling musicians, acrobats, versifiers, etc., labelled altogether as *Spielleute*, even though they came from different walks of life and were quite distinctive from one another.<sup>5</sup> The repertoire of French musicians, who entertained the people of the town, included songs entitled *vau de vire*, which originated in the 15<sup>th</sup> century in the town of Vire in Normandy and then became well-known throughout France. Those incredibly popular songs were of a pungent satiric character. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century in France, the songs which were an urban equivalent of *vau de vire*—the so-called voice of the city, or *voix de ville*—gained in popularity. And it was in them that the townsmen could express directly their voice regarding the current local affairs. They were of multi-stanza structure, which stemmed from the need to include both the description of the situation as well as its stinging comments, while the melody line was quite simple. And so *voix de ville* were

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<sup>2</sup> Ibidem: 275–301.

<sup>3</sup> Carl DAHLHAUS, *Nineteenth-Century Music*, Berkeley 1989: 229.

<sup>4</sup> Wiktor GUSIEW, *Estetyka folkloru*, [Esthetics of Folklore], Wrocław 1974: 37.

<sup>5</sup> Walter SALMEN, *The Musician in the Middle Ages*, [in:] Walter Salmen (ed.), *The Social Status of the Professional Musician from The Middle Ages to the 19<sup>th</sup> century*, New York 1983: 21.

not very difficult to perform and basically anybody could venture singing them. Dance rhythms such as pavaues, galliards, etc., were soon incorporated into those songs, therefore making them even more attractive to perform during common gatherings and parties.<sup>6</sup>

Those easy to memorize dance-songs of satiric character, that were used for accompanying drinking gatherings and other fun-filled parties, were quickly becoming popular mainly through oral tradition. As a result, lyrics got modified (certain words were frequently changed, lost, and the content was adjusted accordingly to reflect the current state of affairs, etc.) as well as their musical contents (matching the performer's range, interfering with similar melodies, etc.). Their catchy and tuneful refrains remained the characteristic feature of vaudeville songs.

Vaudeville can be defined as a kind of a play where dialogue was interspersed with singing and dancing acts; the play that would allow urban audience to laugh and joke about themselves and simultaneously mock others. Vaudeville touched upon current events and local concerns, while its entertainment role was based on the fundamental difference between the serious life—mocked and scoffed at, and a convention of a fun musical entertainment.<sup>7</sup> The actors and the audience would unite in singing and performing select fragments. The simplicity of the musical parts became a key element of vaudeville which enabled the coming together of performers and spectators during their shared act. Moreover, local concerns presented in vaudeville were directly referring to the 'here and now', the factor making the reception and understanding of what was meant easier.

Based on the tradition of entertainment plays, which used a hidden scenario rooted in social consciousness, a framework of a vaudeville was soon written down.<sup>8</sup> However, vaudevilles in Europe, similarly to the so-called minstrel shows of the nineteenth century America, were of a rather loosely-constructed form. This allowed the participants to repeat and replay some of the randomly

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<sup>6</sup> About the history of vaudeville see Clifford BARNES, *Vaudeville*, [in:] Stanley Sadie (ed.), *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, Vol. 26, London, 2001: 340–343.

<sup>7</sup> Ryszard KANTOR, *Uniwersalizm i partykularyzm zabawy*, [Universalism and Particularism of Entertainment], [in:] Ryszard Kantor, *Poważnie i na niby. Szkice o zabawach i zabawkach* [Seriously and Frivolously. Studies on Games and Toys], Kielce 2003: 9.

<sup>8</sup> Jan GRAD, 'Zabawa—analiza pojęć i koncepcji' [Entertainment—Analysis of Terms and Concepts, [in:] *Zabawy i Zabawki* [Games and Toys] 1997, No. 1–2: 16.

picked individual parts of the act, such as songs and jokes and fragments where the performers would show off their dancing and musical skills.<sup>9</sup>

Vaudeville's structure was codified at the beginning of the eighteenth century, nevertheless it still remained closely bound to the rhythm of a city. Performances, which took place for example during fairs, were gradually moved from a market place to a nearby theatre. As this entertainment avenue got institutionalized, some of vaudeville's elements were incorporated into opéra bouffe. With time, light dances, songs, jokes, and even acrobatic stunts were steadily penetrating into the operetta.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, the operetta rapidly grew in fame in European capital cities and was exceptionally triumphant in theatre-filled Vienna (e.g. famous Theater in der Josefstadt or Theater in der Leopoldstadt).<sup>10</sup> This city, composed of a strong middle class eagerly frequenting music theatres, was a great place for the genre to develop. Consequently, numerous Offenbach-tradition followers started to appear there. The economic stability brought a need for a more elaborate social life and so going to music theatres became one of the most favourite forms of entertainment for the Viennese. Péter Hanák claims that the form of operetta, which is basically a 'metropolitan mass entertainment', suited very well with the atmosphere of the epoch.<sup>11</sup> The lustrous glamour of the operetta world attracted those who dreamt about the wealth portrayed onstage, as well as those who had lost their fortune during the economic crisis of the seventies in the nineteenth century.

In the second half of the nineteenth century Vienna played the role of a cultural centre and served as a point of reference and a benchmark for the cultural life of the Habsburg Empire.<sup>12</sup> Vienna, with its many attractions, drew people from all parts of the empire. They would come not only for business but also for entertainment or academic-related purposes. Moreover, many residents of Kraków made regular trips to Vienna and Polish students attended

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<sup>9</sup> Anna G. PIOTROWSKA, 'Od blackface minstrelsy do jazzu—muzyka czarnych obywateli Stanów Zjednoczonych' [From Blackface Minstrel Shows to Jazz—Music of Black Citizens of the USA], [in:] *Literatura Ludowa*, 2004, No. 3: 53–54.

<sup>10</sup> Richard TRAUBNER, *Operetta...* (2003): 103.

<sup>11</sup> Péter HANÁK, *The Garden and the Workshop. Essays on the Cultural History of Vienna and Budapest*, Princeton 1998: 136.

<sup>12</sup> Maria BOBROWNICKA, *Narkotyk mitu. Szkice o świadomości narodowej i kulturowej Słowian zachodnich i południowych* [Narcotic Power of Myths. Studies on National and Cultural Awareness of the West and South Slavs], Kraków 1995: 14.

the Viennese university too. The world of the Viennese operetta also reached other cultural centres within the empire, especially Budapest.

## 2.

Konstanty Krumłowski, a Cracovian of many generations, was educated in Kraków and spent most of his life there (except for a few years in Warsaw, from 1900 to 1907). Following his father's advice—who wished for his son to have a good job—Krumłowski studied law at the Jagiellonian University for two years. By the end of the nineteenth century he spent about three years in Vienna<sup>13</sup>—the capital of operetta and garden theatres of the time. It is more than likely that his interest with theatre grew stronger then and his focus shifted to vaudeville. Fascinated with the Young Poland ideals, Krumłowski eventually left college to become first an actor and then a journalist. He also joined an artistic Bohemia to never part with it and ended up writing vaudevilles throughout the rest of his life.

Vaudevilles by Krumłowski are known for their wit and effortless language. They consist of a few acts in which the author plans for both dancing and singing parts. Władysław Powiadomski and Józef Marek were among the music composers for his plays. In their printed editions, musical fragments of a vaudeville—usually consisting of a melody or a melody with a piano accompaniment—were placed at the very end. The arrangements are characterized by simple musical means: they remain contained within the framework of major-minor tonal system, are of a periodical structure, are often based on a verse structure and make use of dance rhythms (e.g. waltz, mazurka).

One may wonder in what way the music scene of Vienna, where Krumłowski (as a young man with a receptive mind) spent some time, could have influenced his later works. The questions are: to what extent was Krumłowski fascinated with musical plays and Viennese operettas? And, to what extent were his works the expression of local traditions?

The answers to those questions are to be found, among others, in the analysis of the genesis and content of a vaudeville composed in 1899, entitled *Piękny Rigo* [Beautiful Rigo], where a few parts are set to music by Józef Marek.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Henryk BABRAL, *Postłowie* [Afterword], [in:] Konstanty Krumłowski, *Królowa przedmieścia* [The Queen of the Suburbs], Kraków 1991: 103.

<sup>14</sup> Konstanty KRUMŁOWSKI, *Piękny Rigo* [Beautiful Rigo], Kraków, 1931.

3.

The origins of *Piękny Rigo* can be traced to Krumłowski's time spent in Vienna. This vaudeville is based on an actual event, widely spoken about in the capital of the empire, and publicized with an air of a romantically-scandalous atmosphere. The protagonists of the scandal were Pákozdi Rigó Jancsi (Johann Rigó)—a Gypsy violinist—and Princess Clara Ward-Chimay. The violinist, born in Székesfehérvár in Hungary, performed with his band in many European capital cities and met all kinds of people. His acquaintance with Clara Ward-Chimay (1873–1916) resulted in an international scandal. She was the daughter of a wealthy American who at times was even called a millionaire.<sup>15</sup> In 1890 she married a Belgian prince Chimay. And when she met the violinist for the first time, she was already a mother of two children. Yet, she decided to leave her husband (a formal divorce took place in 1897) and engaged in a relationship with the Gypsy musician.<sup>16</sup> During their trek across Europe they visited many countries, including Hungary. Their romance became a source of gossip among their contemporaries,<sup>17</sup> and its popularity can most likely be attributed to Clara's American roots and the Cinderella-like story of her social advancement and subsequent resignation from a high social status for love, etc. Between the years 1896–1898 the couple's affair was extensively covered by the newspapers.<sup>18</sup> After parting with Rigó she remarried two times and the story of her life reappeared in papers after her death.<sup>19</sup> It is also worth noting

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<sup>15</sup> No author, 'Clara Ward dies in Italy', [in:] *The New York Times*, Dec. 19, 1916: 3 ('the late Captain Eber Ward, the wealthiest man in Michigan, where he was known as the 'King of the Lakes.' He left her more than \$3,000,000').

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Ilona Dobos, *Egy öreg muzsikusz emlékei*, [in:] Ilona Dobos, *Áldozatok*, Budapest 1981: 171–182.

<sup>17</sup> 'Deserted Her Gypsy Lover. The Princess Chimay and Rigo Have a Violent Quarrel', [in:] *The New York Times*, Jan. 28, 1897: 2 ('London, Jan. 27—A dispatch to The Mail from Vienna says that a violent quarrel occurred at Milan between the Princess Chimay (formerly Miss Clara Ward of Detroit, Mich.,) and Janos [...]').

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Balint SÁROSI, 'The Golden Age of Gypsy Bands in Hungary', [in:] *The Hungarian Quarterly*, Volume XLV, No. 173, Spring, 2004.

<sup>19</sup> No author, 'Clara Ward dies in Italy', [in:] *The New York Times*, Dec. 19, 1916: 3 ('Four years later, Princess Chimay met Rigo, the Gypsy violinist, who was then playing in a Paris cafe. She became infatuated with him and shortly afterward they eloped and for several years they were frequently heard of in various European capitals. They were together for about three years, and the last heard of the affair was in 1913, when she sued Rigo for \$100,000, which she alleged she had loaned to him').

that Clara Ward-Chimay was very skilful with attracting attention and eagerly posed together with Rigó for postcards, lithographs, etc. (Henri Toulouse-Lautrec made a lithograph of Clara and Rigó in 1897, called *Idylle Princièrè*).<sup>20</sup>



**Illustration 1.** Henri Toulouse –Lautrec, *Idylle Princièrè*, 1897

Source <http://www.toulouse-lautrec-foundation.org/Idylle-Princièrè.html>  
(as of 02.02.2012)

This incredibly intriguing love story of an American lady and a Gypsy musician found its theatrical way to Krumłowski's vaudeville. Although many small facts got changed (for example in the play the couple meets in the United States, not Europe), still the framework of the story about Clara and Rigó remained close to what the public had already known. The author strengthened the authenticity of the story by retaining the original names of the pro-

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<sup>20</sup> The name Rigó became also famous in... the culinary world. Jancsi Rigó cake is still very popular in Hungary, and plenty of recipes bearing the violinist name can be found in Hungarian cookbooks (cf. Karoly GUNDEL, *Gundel's Hungarian cookbook*, Budapest 1992: 130), and currently also online: (Cf. <http://kovisara.wordpress.com/2008/10/05/rigo-jancsi-torta-csak-53/> Accessed 27.12.2011. [http://www.floras-hideout.com/recipes/recipes.php?page=recipes&data=q-r/Rigo\\_Jancsi](http://www.floras-hideout.com/recipes/recipes.php?page=recipes&data=q-r/Rigo_Jancsi). Accessed 27.12.2011).

tagonists—Rigó and Klara (Krumłowski uses a Polish equivalent of the name Clara); Prince Guido Chimay is also present there. The fact that the names were not altered clearly proves that it was a real story that served as its inspiration.

Krumłowski emphasized the realism of the presented situations not only by drawing on an actual scandal, but also by referring to issues generally associated with the Gypsies living in Austria-Hungary. Being a citizen of this country, the author placed Gypsies within a broader Hungarian context, portraying Hungarian Gypsies with a Viennese operetta convention in mind, looking at the Gypsy-related matters through the prism of nationalism. Using a number of stereotypes, he presented the Gypsy world similarly to Johann Strauss, Jr. who portrayed them in *The Gypsy Baron* (1885) as morally ambiguous individuals. The Gypsies, for example, are in an everlasting conflict with a non-Gypsy world. In the first act of Krumłowski's vaudeville, they rebel against being unjustly treated by public officers. As in Strauss' operetta, Krumłowski's play is also about a contentious question regarding the ownership of the land where they reside. Moreover, just as in Viennese operetta, a person called Kalman (however not Kalman Zsupan as in *The Gypsy Baron*, but rather Kalman Arwaj) is engaged in the conflict as well.

Following the Viennese operetta example, Krumłowski decided to assign roles based on the character of the protagonists. He wrote the roles having specific social groups in mind. The portrayal of the representatives of these groups was based on the existing models which 'remained in place for a long time, and became established as the stable structure of national alternatives'.<sup>21</sup> And so, most of the time Gypsies were portrayed as a group. It was a continuation of Offenbach's way of showing a colourful, exotic crowd (for example, pirates, vagabonds, and also Gypsies) in operettas. Imperial public officers, also present in vaudevilles, do not speak highly of Gypsies, calling them a mob<sup>22</sup>, or even the scum of the earth.<sup>23</sup> Yet, in *Piękny Rigo* we do find an exemplary Gypsy violinist, and Schmutzbrand, not a very honest talent hunter and someone whose last name is indicative of his vile intentions. Impresario Schmutzbrand (who, in the vaudeville, faced with a failure of his American tour he had organized,

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<sup>21</sup> Tamás HOFER, *Construction of the 'Folk Cultural Heritage' in Hungary and Rival Versions of National Identity*, [in:] Tamás Hofer (ed.), *Hungarians between 'East' and 'West'. Three essays on National Myths and Symbols*, Budapest 1994: 45–46.

<sup>22</sup> Konstanty KRUMŁOWSKI, *Piękny...* (1931): 42, 44, 45, 77.

<sup>23</sup> Ibidem: 84.



becomes a travelling button trader) brings to mind the figure of a well-known Jewish trader in Galicia. The possibility of such an interpretation of this character is also supported by the Viennese tradition (for example, it was a common practice to present the swine breeder Zsupan from *The Gypsy Baron* operetta by J. Strauss, Jr. as a Jew). What is more, Schmutzbrand, in Krumłowski's vaudeville, speaks with a bad stutter—similarly to a Jewish lawyer Dr. Blind from another operetta by J. Strauss, Jr.—*Die Fledermause* [The Bat].

An operetta convention required that Gypsies were portrayed as people who loved music and dance. In the first act of Krumłowski's play, the Gypsies present a self-portrayal singing that, 'it is customary in our country to shape our taste in music since childhood, drink good Tokay, and kiss a comely girl'.<sup>24</sup> In a vaudeville they were assigned certain characteristic instruments used in *Zigeunerkapellen*, most of all a dulcimer (a scene from the second act taking place during the American tour), but also an associated with Spain—tambourine (a song of Csirka from the fourth act, third scene) and—most of all—a violin. Gypsy violinists in the vaudeville not only gain recognition for their violin playing talent but also owe their success to their personal charm: they are young and unusually handsome boys (Rigó is even called a 'black Adonis'<sup>25</sup> at one time) who are very popular with women ('All girls like music and boys with black eyes...').<sup>26</sup> Rigó is the leader of his group: not only does he play the first violin but he is also responsible for the whole band.

As already mentioned, the protagonists presented in the play are both of Gypsy and non-Gypsy origin. Following the conventional approach inherited from the Viennese operetta, Krumłowski included both types of characters. It is particularly visible in the American context (being a sort of a counterpoint for the European world) where the heroes are treated in a stereotypical way. The American high society is made up of: a bored and rich dame looking out to have some fun, her rich husband who is much older and in love with her and their reasonable preacher whose religious life is rather questionable. The far-away America associated with rich and lavish lifestyle, and the possibility of making a fortune in no time, mirrors the social relations of the European so-called upper class.

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<sup>24</sup> Konstanty KRUMŁOWSKI, *Piękny...* (1931): 19.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibidem*: 54.

<sup>26</sup> Konstanty KRUMŁOWSKI, *Piękny...* (1931): 10.

The author skilfully used exotic elements in such a way that they were not associated with the Gypsies but rather with the United States. In order to underline Clara Ward's American roots, the author moved the plot of the second act to the other side of the Atlantic Ocean. This presented him with the opportunity to portray a colourful group of people from the New World: Bob, an African-American butler, and Pastor Smith, a shady individual who is the American counterpart of *Tartuffe*. In his vaudeville, Krumłowski offered a characteristic mix of exotic elements, the Viennese operetta and Gypsy folklore.

The simple musical means found in *Piękny Rigo* are a natural consequence of the principles of vaudeville. The sparse musical fragments are in line with the requirements of the genre: they are very simple, tuneful and intended for dancing. Krumłowski planned for sixteen musical segments: eight of them were arranged by Marek and the remaining ones were never scored.

**Table 1.** The breakdown of musical fragments suggested by Krumłowski and the parts that actually were scored by Marek

Singing parts in the vaudeville envisaged by Krumłowski	Singing parts with Marek's arrangements
Singing part 1	No.1. Women and children chorus
Singing part 2: Csirka's Gypsy song	
Singing part 3	No.2. Couplet—duet
Singing part 4	No.3. Rigó's csardas
Singing part 5	No.4. Rigó's aria with the chorus
Singing part 6	No.5. Princess Klara's couplet
Singing part 7	No.7 Klara and Rigó
Singing part 8	No.7 Klara and Rigó
Singing part 9: Rigó and Klara's duet	
Singing part 10: Hansia's waltz	
Singing part 11	No.8. Couplets with dances
Singing part 12: Act III. Scene 5. Schmutzbrand's couplets	
Singing part 13: Act III. Scene 8. Couplets with the chorus, Rigó and Klara	
Singing part 14: Act IV. Scene 1. Schmutz's couplets	
Singing part 15: Act IV. Scene 3. (Csirka in her traditional Gypsy dress, holding tambourine in her hand)	
Singing part 16: Act IV. Scene 6. (Guido) Refrain suggested as a waltz	
Singing part 17: Act IV. Scene 10. Reminiscence of Rigó's csardas	

All fragments scored by Marek are arranged for voice (or voices) with piano accompaniment. Understanding the reality of performing vaudevilles on stages of outdoor cafés, the composer called for the means available to amateur or semi-professional performers. The piano part doubles the melody line of the soloist, ‘cueing’ the singer as to the right tones of the melody and providing harmonic background. Neither the instrumental, nor the vocal parts require any special performing skills.

And so, it was rather the plot and the conventional approach to the musical means rather than the musical layer of the vaudeville that were determined by associations with its Viennese counterpart. The origins of *Piękny Rigo* by Krumłowski may also be traced back to the Viennese operetta entitled *Der schöne Rigo* (composed in 1898) which translates into Polish as ... *Piękny Rigo*. The author of that play, Carl Michael Ziehrer (1843–1922), was a famous operetta composer in Vienna. The libretto for *Der schöne Rigo* was penned by Leopold Krenn and Carl Lindau,<sup>27</sup> but aside from the identical title and a focus on the Gypsy themes, the Ziehrer’s operetta (with its plot set in 1860 Hungary and the Gypsy and Hungarians as the main characters<sup>28</sup>) and Krumłowski’s vaudeville share little in common.

#### 4.

It seems to me that reaching for established operetta models did not stand in the way of embracing local values. Moreover, a focus on promoting the local idiom in vaudeville was strictly adhered to. In order to understand *Piękny Rigo* vaudeville, it must be emphasized that Gypsies were an integral part of the colourful culture of Kraków. Among the written accounts of Gypsy music is the one by a Young Poland writer—Stanisław Przybyszewski. The author is reminiscing on his first encounter with a Gypsy band on his arrival in Kraków in 1898:

‘One time I saw a group of Gypsies—never before have I heard dulcimer in my life—and their music got me so excited that all [around] were astonished by my behaviour and the absolute silence ensued when I’d taken the lead of

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<sup>27</sup> Carl Michael ZIEHRER, *Der schöne Rigo. Operette in 2 Acten von L. Krenn und C. Lindau*, Leipzig 1898.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibidem*.

this small orchestra—the whole world seized to exist to me—there was only dulcimer and I, the conductor’.<sup>29</sup>

Krumłowski’s vaudeville can be credited with helping the people of Kraków to better understand the Gypsy culture. This is in line with Ryszard Kantor’s view that ‘fun-filled activities could antagonize various ethnic groups but they could also bring them closer; the process of getting to know each other is also possible’.<sup>30</sup> The light and fun character of the vaudeville created a friendly platform for presenting the colourful Gypsy world that was part of the Habsburg Empire.

Hence I will argue that even though *Piękny Rigo* seems to be a vaudeville touching upon issues not necessarily connected with Kraków, but rather focusing on questions imported from Vienna, the context in which it is presented is consistent with the local idiom. Krumłowski’s interest in the local—i.e. relating to Kraków—matters is clearly recognizable in his next vaudevilles. The plays focus mainly around current affairs of the city, its customs and traditions. The titles of select vaudevilles speak volumes: *Przewodnik tatrzański* [The Tatra Guide] (1911), *Śluby dębnickie* [Dębniki Weddings] (1915), *Białe fartuszki* [White Aprons] (1919), and *Jaskółka z wieży mariackiej* [A Swallow from the Our Lady Church Tower in Kraków] (1937). By drawing upon the folklore of Kraków and the surrounding areas of Dębniki and Zwierzyniec, Krumłowski’s works are evidence of embracing and preserving local traditions.

His literary debut *Królowa przedmieścia* [The Queen of the Suburbs] of 1898 about the village of Zwierzyniec (currently part of the city of Kraków) turned out to be quite a success. With music scored by Władysław Powiadowski (1865–1947), it not only proved to be a very popular play, but also was highly acclaimed by the contemporaries. As Przybyszewski put it: ‘Krumłowski’s melodrama *Królowa przedmieścia*, [...] enjoyed a great success’<sup>31</sup>, and also ‘showed quite a talent of the author’.<sup>32</sup>

The plot of the vaudeville contains some autobiographical elements. It was no secret that young Krumłowski fell in love with a beautiful girl who worked in the cigar factory in Kraków, located at Dolne Młyny Street. Mania (a di-

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<sup>29</sup> Stanisław PRZYBYSZEWSKI, *Moi współcześni* (tom I *Wśród obcych*) [My Contemporaries (Vol. I, Among Strangers)], Warszawa 1959: 305.

<sup>30</sup> Ryszard KANTOR, *Uniwersalizm...* (2003): 17.

<sup>31</sup> Stanisław PRZYBYSZEWSKI, *Moi współcześni...* (1959): 297.

<sup>32</sup> Ibidem: 300.

minutive of Maria)—as this was the name of the beloved girl—lived in the village of Półwsie Zwierzynieckie near Kraków. The real identity of the character, immortalized by Krumłowski, has never been clearly established. According to Julian Zinkow,<sup>33</sup> the girl's real name was Maria Dzierwańska. However, in other authors' views, it was Maria Bajus (Henryk Babral is for example of that opinion).<sup>34</sup> The results of the research carried out by Michał Kozioł published in the weekly magazine 'Tygodnik Salwatorski' in 1995, show that the said Maria was attempting to usurp the title of 'the queen of the suburbs' and to be Krumłowski's muse. In fact, she may only have been a friend of the real Mania.<sup>35</sup> The author learned that the name of the authentic protagonist—this 'honest, beautiful, and as good as an angel' girl—was Maria Dzierwa-Zawadzka. It was her who inspired Krumłowski to write a vaudeville that would honour the life of Cracovian rafters and girls working in a cigar factory. On the one hand, the vaudeville glorified such virtues as honesty and hard work, on the other, it strongly criticized the actions of the public officers in Kraków. The play also served as a pretext for singing a few couplets composed by Powiadomski. Among them, there were traditional krakowiaks, in 2/4 time with typical syncopated rhythms. Their simplicity and likeable tunes made everybody want to join in. The other ones included a mazurka performed by Mania and couplets by other protagonists. The final chorus is marked 'tempo gawotta' [tempo of a gavotte].<sup>36</sup> Even though the spoken parts of Krumłowski's vaudevilles are quite long, still no professional preparation was required to perform them. Such an approach was deliberate as vaudevilles were intended for garden theatres. *Królowa przedmieścia* premiered in the 'Pod Słońcem' theatre [Under the Sun] located in a popular Park Krakowski [Kraków Park].

Krumłowski's vaudevilles undoubtedly continued the tradition of early vaudevilles which were performed outdoors and intertwined with the rhythm of the city, where both performers and the audience were at the same time the participants of the play. This can be proved for example by the fact that

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<sup>33</sup> Julian ZINKOW, *Podkrakowskie wycieczki* [Trips Around Kraków Area], Kraków 1977: 59.

<sup>34</sup> Henryk BABRAL, *Posłowie...* (1991): 102.

<sup>35</sup> Michał KOZIOŁ, 'Królowa przedmieścia' [The Queen of the Suburbs], [in:] *Tygodnik Salwatorski*, May 7, 1995, No. 19/20 available at: <http://tygodniksalwatorski.icm.com.pl/modules.php?op=modload&name=News&file=article&sid=316&mode=thread&order=0&thold=0> (As of 29.04.2007).

<sup>36</sup> Konstanty KRUMŁOWSKI, *Królowa...* (1991): 98.

Przybyszewski would drop by to see *Królowa przedmieścia*<sup>37</sup> every single day. Moreover, Krumłowski's vaudevilles are a mocking record of current events and scandals, spoken about in the city. Everyday problems of the townsmen were mirrored in his vaudevilles. From a historical point of view Krumłowski's vaudevilles not only vividly portray the customs of Kraków at the beginning of the twentieth century, but also serve today as a colourful record presenting various forms of entertainment and amusement of the old Kraków.

Numerous references to Krumłowski's works found in diaries and other accounts from the beginning of the twentieth century prove that his incredibly popular vaudevilles met the social need for this kind of entertainment.<sup>38</sup> A witty and informative dialog about Polish operettas and vaudevilles was published in 1903 in *Przewodnik zakochanych* [A Guide for the Enamoured] authored by M. A. Zawadzki.<sup>39</sup> The foreign operettas known to the interlocutors include: *The Gypsy Baron* by J. Strauss, Jr., *Gasparone*—also by a Viennese composer, Carl Millöcker (1842–1899). From among the Polish composers, Powiadowski and Marek—Krumłowski's collaborators—were discussed in the first place! Krumłowski and his *Piękny Rigo* were also mentioned. This vaudeville was mistakenly called *Szalona Księżna* [A Mad Duchess] (which accurately, however, refers to its content). The lady who complains that 'there are so few Polish stage composers writing operetta and vaudeville, while German and French composers flood us with their acts' is addressed by a gentleman with a more optimistic attitude assuring her that 'it isn't that bad'.<sup>40</sup> He mentions Krumłowski as an example.

A role of Krumłowski's vaudeville, recognized as early as at the beginning of the twentieth century, deserves to be brought back and emphasised also one hundred years later, at the threshold of the twenty-first century. Not only does Krumłowski seem to be the 'main representative of Polish vaudeville',<sup>41</sup> but also, the vaudeville he created is a genre deeply rooted in the local mentality, having at the same time strong ties to the Viennese vaudeville and operetta traditions.

*Translated by Paweł Wróbel*

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<sup>37</sup> Henryk BABRAL, *Posłowie...* (1991): 105.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibidem*: 100.

<sup>39</sup> M. A. ZAWADZKI, *Przewodnik zakochanych* [A Guide for the Enamoured], reprint from 1903, Warszawa 2007: 73–74. Apparently 'Zawadzki' was a pseudonym sometimes used by Krumłowski himself.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibidem*: 74.

<sup>41</sup> Henryk BABRAL, *Posłowie...* (1991): 100.

### Abstract

At the beginning of the twentieth century Konstanty Krumłowski (1872–1938) cultivated in Kraków the tradition of vaudeville as an author of texts, to which the music (dances, sung couplets) was composed by local, often by now forgotten composers. Wit, dramatic concept as well as melodiousness and simplicity of the musical fragments made these works incredibly popular. The pieces were created with a local society in mind and would describe events and places directly related to Kraków, which is evidenced in their very titles, for example: *Przewodnik tatrzański* [The Tatra Guide] (1911), *Śluby dębnickie* [Dębniki Weddings] (1915), *Białe fartuszki* [White Aprons] (1919), and *Jaskółka z wieży mariackiej* [A Swallow from the Our Lady Church Tower in Kraków] (1937), *Królowa przedmieścia* [The Queen of the Suburbs] (1898). However, in case of Krumłowski, one may notice obvious influences of the Viennese operetta resulting from a cultural transfer. Those influences manifest themselves in the choice of a subject matter, the role assignment, predilection to the waltz rhythms, etc. They stem from Krumłowski's personal experiences (he went to college in Vienna) as well as from the contemporary political situation of Kraków—then a part of the Austria-Hungary. Krumłowski's early vaudeville *Piękny Rigo* [Beautiful Rigo] set to Józef Marek's music serves here as an example illustrating the coexistence of both the Viennese and local motifs.

**Keywords:** vaudeville, Krumłowski, Kraków.

