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## Juliusz Kaden-Bandrowski about Music, Work and Writing – a Writer at the Piano

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### Abstract

The paper recalls the figure of the leading writer of the Second Polish Republic, Juliusz Kaden-Bandrowski. Alluding to his biography and his acquired musical education in his youth, it makes the point that this influenced his artistic attitude. The center of analysis is Kaden-Bandrowski's article devoted to Aleksander Michałowski, an excellent pianist in the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The main thesis of the article is Kaden-Bandrowski's great respect for Michałowski's work and creative effort, which he partially owed to his early musical education. The author also references to Kaden-Bandrowski's critical texts from the beginning of his literary career as well as his association with the Fryderyk Chopin International Piano Competition; which began in 1927 in Warsaw. Kaden-Bandrowski was a member of the organizing committee for the first competition.

**Keywords:** interwar period, Juliusz Kaden-Bandrowski, Aleksander Michałowski, pianist, journalism, music.

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Juliusz Kaden-Bandrowski<sup>1</sup> held an exceptional position among the artistic elites of the Second Polish Republic. An infallibly devoted Józef Piłsudski's soldier, his adjutant during the legion battles, chronicler of the First Brigade, one of the most important creators of the legion's legend, who became an extremely important participant in the struggle for the rebirth of Polish statehood. Following 1918, the writer was actively involved in important cultural activities undertaken in the capital city, in the field of literature, theater, as well as music. He occupied many official posts, and his relationships, not only social ones, with the Piłsudski camp, which took over the power in the country after 1926, made him an influential person in interwar culture. He was, among other, the President of the Polish Writers' Trade Union, the General Secretary of the Polish Academy of Literature, active in the Polish branch of the PEN Club – he was one of its founders, and he organized, jointly with Arnold Szyfman, the Society for the Encouragement of Theatre Culture<sup>2</sup>. He also undertook activities related to Warsaw musical life. Apart from participating in the committee organizing the first Fryderyk Chopin International Piano Competition, in 1931 he also requested money from the city authorities for the Higher School of Music, which the city budget had not allocated for organizing concerts of Polish and foreign music schools' laureates. He objected when the Musical Society was not awarded the grant to publish Stanisław Moniuszko's works and he also wished to launch the printing of Henryk Melcer's piano concertos<sup>3</sup>.

Despite his functions and connections with authorities (after 1926), he did not become a favorite of the Sanation camp, with which he had complicated professional and social relations<sup>4</sup>. He owed his high position in the artistic milieu of the capital mainly to literature. He owed his high position in the artistic milieu of the capital mainly to literature, that is to his subsequent political novels published

<sup>1</sup> At the beginning of his literary activity the writer signed his texts: Juliusz Bandrowski, but in the following years he also added his mother's family name and signed them: Juliusz Kaden-Bandrowski. In the journalistic and critical discourse, when writing about the author of *General Barcz*, it was common to use only the surname Kaden – a practice that is also followed by contemporary researchers of the writer's work.

<sup>2</sup> The facts from the official biography of the writer are provided herein on the basis of: E.G. [E. Głębička], biographical note: *Kaden-Bandrowski Juliusz*, [in:] *Współcześni polscy pisarze i badacze literatury. Słownik biobibliograficzny*, vol. 4, ed. J. Czachowska and A. Szałagan, Wydawnictwo Szkole i Pedagogiczne, Warszawa 1996, pp. 8–9.

<sup>3</sup> See J. Kaden-Bandrowski, *Kultura w mieście*, [in:] idem, *Za stołem i na rynku*, Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, Publishing House, Lwów 1932, p. 242. This was an excerpt, as the footnote informs, of a speech given by Kaden at the meeting of the City Council in Warsaw during the discussion on the budget in 1931.

<sup>4</sup> Michał Sprusiński wrote about it in the most stirring way many years ago, objecting to an abusive simplification of Kaden-Bandrowski's professional biography and to summarizing it with the words "sanation writer", exposing only the negative connotation of the term. See M. Sprusiński, *Tak wspaniała a tak biedny w istocie*, [in:] idem, *Juliusz Kaden-Bandrowski. Życie i twórczość*, Wydawnictwo Literackie, Kraków 1971, p. 5–11.

after 1918 such as *General Barcz* (*General Barcz*), *Mateusz Bigda* (*Matthew Bigda*), *Czarne skrzydła* (*Black Wings*), all of them closely intertwined with the current reality. They invariably caused a great deal of stir among critics and readers at the time, not least because of their daring way of presenting moral issues. Certainly, the writer was an uncommon person, always arousing extreme emotions in others, as noted by those recalling him. Kazimierz Wierzyński also recalled how complex a personality Kaden-Bandrowski was:

Kaden's worth was not properly appreciated in Poland, possibly because people disliked him. He had more enemies than friends, and he alienated the latter too, even unintentionally. The source of everything was, in my opinion, a terrible Polish trait – vanity. He was ruled by vanity like a demon. He couldn't tame his pride. I have been observing it for years – with pain and disappointment of an elderly friend. But all of Kaden's – good and evil – deserve more memory and more understanding than he is being devoted to nowadays<sup>5</sup> [all translations – Patrycja Czarnecka-Jaskóła].

Under the PRL political system, Kaden was becoming more and more “absent” for political reasons, even though after 1956 there were a great deal of excellent researchers demonstrating the importance of his work in Polish literature<sup>6</sup>. Undoubtedly, the low interest of readers in his work was also due to artistic aspects (a detailed commentary on the issue of the post-war reception of Kaden's work exceeds the scope of this outline). However, it should be remembered that Andrzej Wajda, while adapting Kaden's novel *Mateusz Bigda*<sup>7</sup> for the Television Theatre in 1991 – the play which he entitled *Bigda idzie* (*Here comes Bigda*) – thus confirmed the artistic appeal that probably lies not only in this particular book of the writer.

Among the variety of facts and events that are part of the writer's rich professional life, his relationships with music are probably still the least frequently recalled<sup>8</sup>. Scandals and discussions triggered by Kaden's successive novels or hotly debated publicity campaigns with his participation overshadowed the writer's musical passion. It is his youthful links with music that are most frequently mentioned, and what is emphasized is the fact that before he became a famous novel-

<sup>5</sup> K. Wierzyński, *Pamiętnik poety*, prepared for printing and annotated by P. Kądziała, Oficyna Wydawnicza INTERIM, Warszawa 1991, p. 6.

<sup>6</sup> The first and still the only monograph devoted to the writer's work was written by Michał Sprusiński. Kaden's work was of interest to a group of many eminent literary scholars. Recent works include a book by Andrzej Kaliszewski, which shows the technical excellence of reportage and journalistic works by the author of *General Barcz*; see idem, *Bagnet i pióro. Twórczość publicystyczna Juliusza Kadena-Bandrowskiego*, Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, Toruń 2015..

<sup>7</sup> The premiere of the play *Bigda idzie* by the Television Theatre took place in 1999, the author of the adaptation of the writer's novel and its director was Andrzej Wajda.

<sup>8</sup> See J. Skarbowski, *Juliusz Kaden-Bandrowski jako krytyk muzyczny*, [in:] idem, *Literatura – muzyka. Zbliżenia i dialogi*, “Czytelnik”, Warszawa 1981, p. 98–114; A. Budziszewska, *Publicystyka Juliusza Kadena-Bandrowskiego. W kręgu korespondencji belgijskiej*, “Przegląd Humanistyczny” 1978, no 6, p. 109–120.

ist, he wanted to play the piano, dreaming of performing on the best music scenes of the world<sup>9</sup>. After all, he was supposed to continue the musical family traditions – his mother was a pianist and his uncle was an opera singer<sup>10</sup>. Kaden received a thorough musical education – he studied with excellent results at the conservatories in Leipzig and Brussels. However, fate thwarted his youthful intentions. Andrzej Kaliszewski, while analyzing quite recently the writer's journalistic work, also referred to this “closed” part of his biography:

Unfortunately, the clear prospect of his international career as a piano virtuoso was probably prevented by his hand injury (although it was an incident which he had suffered in childhood, its far-reaching effects became apparent only in Brussels). Thus, the future legionary focused on his two other passions, namely writing and politics. However, it was music – as a subject matter – that occupied, hardly surprisingly, an important place in his journalism at the time, as well as it recurred much later (a very original and professional essay book about Chopin: *Life of Chopin*, 1937)<sup>11</sup>.

A meticulous researcher of the General Barcz's author's journalism emphasized the fact that writing about music not only started his literary activity – it also became the crowning of his interwar work. The book about Chopin written in 1938 was, as Kaliszewski noted, the last one entirely devoted to and constructed around a homogeneous theme, which the writer published before 1939. The volume *Wspomnienie i nadzieje* (*Memory and Hopes*), published virtually at the same time, consisted of texts of a journalistic nature as well, but dealing with many different problems<sup>12</sup>. It should be stressed, however, that Kaden wrote about music and many issues related to it throughout the interwar period, although he did so with varied intensity<sup>13</sup>. At the beginning of his journalistic career in 1906, being himself a publicist and art reviewer, he wrote about the critical act itself:

A critic is a man who listens to the inner music that fills every sound work of art and brings out the poetry which is behind it<sup>14</sup>.

Music and poetry became a symbol of artistic perfection, achieving equal status in the hierarchy of aesthetic values of the critic. The metaphorical definition of the core of a work of art, as well as the critic's vocation – as an attentive listener

<sup>9</sup> Cit. per: J. Skarbowski, *Juliusz Kaden-Bandrowski jako krytyk muzyczny...*, s. 93.

<sup>10</sup> A specific literary portrait of his uncle, the opera tenor Aleksander Bandrowski, was sketched by Kaden in one of his short stories based on his childhood memories, which appeared in the volume: *Miasto mojej matki* (*My mother's town*) in 1925. (Sława dedicated the story to his uncle). The writer also published a short memoir dedicated to his uncle, concerning his performance at the Warsaw Opera, which was his childhood recollection. See J. Kaden-Bandrowski, *Wspomnienie o Aleksandrze Bandrowskim*, [in:] *Stulecie Teatru Wielkiego w Warszawie 1833–1933*, ed. E. Świerczewski, Kierownictwo Opery Warszawskiej, Warszawa 1933, p. 38–39.

<sup>11</sup> A. Kaliszewski, *Bagnet i pióro...*, p. 41.

<sup>12</sup> See *ibidem*, p. 290.

<sup>13</sup> See J. Skarbowski, *Juliusz Kaden-Bandrowski jako krytyk muzyczny...*, p. 98–114.

<sup>14</sup> J. Kaden-Bandrowski, *Słów kilka o zadaniach krytyki literackiej*, “*Nasz Kraj*” 1906, vol. 5; cit. per: A. Budziszewska, *Publicystyka Juliusza Kadena-Bandrowskiego...*, p. 114.

– can be perceived as a result of the writer's adherence to the principles of the Young Poland movement's aesthetics. Michał Sprusiński pointed out that Kaden, when formulating this important metacritical declaration, was also inspired by Ignacy Matuszewski's views (the latter also wrote about the inner music of the work of art), thus confirming the link between the views of the novice publicist and distinctive artistic tendencies, which also influenced the critical discourse of the time<sup>15</sup>. The language of criticism, always oscillating between the style of scientific discourse and the journalistic freedom of metaphorical expressions, often used terms related to music, exploiting the universality of musical experiences and impressions that is common to every average recipient of art.

Moving between different artistic disciplines, Kaden believed that great artists used a universal language, regardless of the specificity of the artistic material they made use of to create their own works. Such an understanding of art became clearly apparent, among other things, in the way of interpreting paintings by Jacek Malczewski, who in 1903 showed his canvas for the first time (after the Lviv exhibition) to the Warsaw public:

His [J. Malczewski's – E.W.] work highlights the core content of our contemporary spirituality, and expresses it eloquently, as if in its own language, not borrowed from anybody, harmoniously, as if with the sounds of Old Polish gusles and lute played by waidelottes, modelled into Chopin-like music, powerfully and plastically, as if with a steel burin and chisel<sup>16</sup>.

Eighty paintings by Malczewski, according to the reviewer, should be enjoyed by all the senses, should be read and listened to<sup>17</sup>. The comparison of the painter's work with Frederic Chopin's music and, through it, a link with romantic and folk tradition, became for him the most effective method to finally confirm a unique importance of the artist's painting for the Polish culture and to give him the rank assigned to our most important national artists. This was done by Kaden, the reviewer, when the painter was just beginning to present his work to a wider audience.

Interestingly, Kaden had never become a critic or publicist concentrated solely on aesthetic or artistic issues; on the contrary, he was always interested in the social values of art and its contribution to shaping reality<sup>18</sup>. He recognized its power and importance for raising national consciousness, which was implied by the "nurtured" heritage of Romanticism during the Partitions of Poland. He invariably treated Romanticism as the vital ideological foundation of his active attitude as a writer and of his social attitude, of which he was an ardent advocate, which will be apparent in many of his journalistic statements<sup>19</sup>.

<sup>15</sup> See M. Sprusiński, *Juliusz Kaden-Bandrowski...*, p. 15.

<sup>16</sup> J. Bandrowski, *Ze sztuki. Wystawa Jacka Malczewskiego*, "Kurier Poranny" 1903, no 331, p. 6.

<sup>17</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>18</sup> A. Budziszewska, *Publicystyka Juliusza Kadena-Bandrowskiego...*, p. 117.

<sup>19</sup> See ibidem.

Writing about music in Kaden's case successfully compensated for the interrupted pianist career, hence at the beginning of his journalistic activity music matters were significantly prevalent, thereby introducing the future writer into the world of literature<sup>20</sup>. According to Jerzy Skarbowski's observations<sup>21</sup>, a separate and quite vast subject matter in Kaden's journalism are, among other things, his reviews of the operas (the Warsaw premieres of Wagner's works) written for "Świat" ("The World") in 1922–1932 or his critical reviews and descriptions of Karol Szymanowski's work, which is an important evidence of the writer's – music critic's – attitude towards contemporary output, as the researcher specifically stressed. The difficult mutual relations between the leading writer and the most important composer of our Polish interwar period also had a strictly personal entanglement<sup>22</sup>. And, of course, the most extensive matter, also in literary terms, was the above mentioned image of Frederic Chopin and his music, which also calls for a more comprehensive discussion, even though Kaden's book dated 1938 attracted the attention of even contemporary researchers several times, which was due to the interest in the composer<sup>23</sup>.

The fact that the writer himself wanted to become a piano virtuoso makes it interesting to examine the way he portrayed the pianists he was contemporary with, showing this specific musical theme as an integral and important part of his artistic outlook. Chronologically, the first artist he wrote about was Józef Śliwiński, who at that time was at the peak of his professional career and gave concerts almost all over Europe. In a short report on his performance in Cracow in January 1914, the reviewer for "Naprzód" magazine reported:

There are few pianists in the world today who have such a massive tone, power and vivid temperament as Śliwiński. The piano sounds incredibly lush under the artist's powerful stroke. You can't hear wood, hammers, keys or the mechanism of the instrument which is subordinated to the commanding will, it executes interpretation directions in the the most obedient, the most submissive manner<sup>24</sup>.

Kaden was enthralled by the creative act of the pianist, whose will and decisions – the art of interpretation – subordinated the instrument, resulting in making and playing music. The use of an ingenious trick of "transcribing" the piano "into parts" made the audience realize how complex the process of sound creation itself

<sup>20</sup> See *ibidem*.

<sup>21</sup> See J. Skarbowski, *Juliusz Kaden-Bandrowski jako krytyk muzyczny...*, p. 103–106.

<sup>22</sup> The issues of mutual relations between Karol Szymanowski and Juliusz Kaden-Bandrowski were discussed by Józef Opalski in his book: *Chopin i Szymanowski w literaturze dwudziestolecia międzywojennego*, Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne, Kraków 1980, p. 180–182.

<sup>23</sup> See K. Maciąg, "Naczelnym u nas jest artystą". *O legendzie Fryderyka Chopina w literaturze polskiej*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Rzeszowskiego, Rzeszów 2010. One of the last analyses of Kaden's book from 1938 was presented by Andrzej Kaliszewski; see *idem*, *Bagnet i pióro...*, p. 290–300.

<sup>24</sup> J.K. [J. Kaden], *Z sali koncertowej. Koncert Józefa Śliwińskiego*, "Naprzód" 1914, no 3, p. 5. In all citations, quoted from sources prior to 1939, the spelling has been modernized.

is, which only the performer turns into music with his artistry. The knowledge of the art of playing the piano allowed Kaden to analyze in detail the way the pianist plays, sometimes even “divesting” the music of its artistic secrets “inaccessible” to an average listener. He expressed his remarks from the position of an expert or, as Janusz Slowinski who specializes in the theory of criticism would say, of the initiated recipient<sup>25</sup>. In his reviews, Kaden focused on the pianist’s playing technique, which determined the quality of the performed work, thus describing the movements of his hand, he stressed the influence which the wrist, the forearm had on the way the fingers stroke the keys. Although he was just beginning his career as a music critic, he perfectly adjusted to this new role, judging without any complexes the renowned and twenty years older artist, pointing out to him also the technical deficiencies consisting in not enough, in his opinion, clear finger technique in comparison to the perfectly mastered wrist and arm technique<sup>26</sup>. He attached, which seems obvious, great importance to the technique used by the pianist, also because he knew perfectly well how much of a strictly physical effort he puts into achieving the proper dexterity of the hand.

It was many years later that he described the specificity of the pianist’s workshop in the most comprehensive way, writing in February 1929 about another outstanding piano virtuoso, Aleksander Michałowski. What should be noted is that Michałowski was also the writer’s teacher<sup>27</sup>, although no trace of his personal relationship with the pianist appeared in the text. Kaden talked about the excellent virtuoso and interpreter of Chopin’s works, being himself already a renowned artist and artistic personality of the capital. The essay *Aleksander Michałowski at the piano* was an occasional text, which was written to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the pianist’s creative career. This text is one of the most charming and moving of all the writer’s journalistic writings on music, and sets him apart from other essays devoted to artistic issues. Michałowski’s mastery was confirmed and there was no need anymore to convince anyone of it. The writer was interested in the way the virtuoso worked, which was a decisive factor in his achievements, and this was perfectly in line with the convention of a jubilee essay, customarily highlighting the advantages of the protagonist. The portrait of the great pianist begins with the presentation of his preparations for two Chopin concertos (in E minor and F minor):

However, anyone who truly knows the essence of the performing arts understands that it would not be an exaggeration if, in fact, after sixty years of activity, the master was preparing now, as if starting from the beginning, for a new performance. After all, there is no performance that could be a repetition of the previous one, but it is always a step forward

<sup>25</sup> The term is borrowed from the fundamental, for all critics, article of the researcher; see J. Sławiński, *Funkcje krytyki literackiej*, [in:] idem, *Dzieło. Język. Tradycja. Prace wybrane*, vol. 2, ed. W. Bolecki, Universitas, Kraków 1998, p. 164.

<sup>26</sup> J.K. [J. Kaden], *Z sali koncertowej. Koncert Józefa Śliwińskiego*, “Naprzód” 1914, no 3, p. 5.

<sup>27</sup> Cit. per: M. Sprusiński, *Juliusz Kaden-Bandrowski...*, p. 13.

from one perfection to another, even greater. Thus, it does not matter whether there were forty or four thousand performances: The very evolution leads the man forward, imposing on him new constraints of ever more subtle and greater perfection<sup>28</sup>.

On the one hand, the term ‘imitation’ is used, confirming the obvious secondary role of the performer in relation to the composer’s creation, but on the other hand, the pianist’s extraordinary creative effort is pointed out. It was the virtuoso’s constant and continuous self-improvement that aroused the writer’s admiration. He emphasized the importance of the scale of technical difficulties and the precision with which the pianist’s fingers must strike the instrument’s keys:

Working on the technique requires incredible perfection. The particular notes of the chord struck a hundredth or a thousandth of a second earlier, or more slowly, would alter the entire chord color. If the fingertips flatten on the touched key too hurriedly, or too slowly, the tone will become too dense, or diluted, which will interrupt the proper line of the melody.

Thus, is the virtuoso’s work always the same, focused on the same goals of mechanics?

Not at all! The work is always different from the previous one. The thirty-year-old Michałowski was looking for achieving a different result on the keyboard, and today the old master is not looking for the same. Therefore, he has to adjust his technique constantly, temper and tune it to be a proper expression of his most recent spiritual goals. He must therefore continually reform his technique<sup>29</sup>.

The pianist was in the writer’s eyes an artist, capable of expressing his own spiritual truths, revealed through the interpretation of a musical piece, which was conditioned by life and artistic experience. Behind such a detailed characterization of Kaden-music critic, which should be emphasized once again, appeared Kaden-pianist who physically experienced long hours of practice, taking much longer than the concert applauded by the audience. Interestingly, in one of the few recollections about Kaden from the period of his studies at the conservatory in Belgium, he was also „captured” and remembered at the piano. Józef Brodzki, a witness of the writer’s youth, wrote down:

The real nuisance of our “Pension de Famille” in Ixelles, Brussels, was a student of the conservatory – small, ugly, stocky, with arched legs, thick long hair and a black tie à La Lavallière, indispensable at the time. He practiced from morning till night, he was actually torturing us. Sometimes, when we could hear a beautiful musical phrase from Chopin, Bach or Mozart, it seemed that this music would continue, that we could take a breath after the “faltering” exercises. Not at all. As if, in spite of all expectations, the annoying, dull, quite impersonal and as if new, not musical, but mathematical, stubborn finger and scale exercises, then scale and finger excises again bumped into our heads<sup>30</sup>.

<sup>28</sup> J. Kaden-Bandrowski, *Aleksander Michałowski przy fortepianie*, „Gazeta Polska” 1929, no 285; cit. per: idem, *Za stołem i na rynku*, Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, Wydawnictwo, Lwów 1932, p. 189.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, p. 191.

<sup>30</sup> J. Brodzki, *Kaden i Aciaki*, “Współczesność” 1962, no 1; cit. per: M. Sprusiński, *Juliusz Kaden Bandrowski...*, p. 13.



When writing many years later about the technical nuances of playing the piano, Kaden not only explained the importance of the technique, but also elevated the pianist's technical exercises to the rank of creative activities which are an important step towards a masterly performance of a musical piece. It is worth noting, by the way, that this friend from the times of the writer's student youth showed the impatience typical of a layman's attitude, even a music lover, who is habitually not fully aware of, or rather tends to forget, what comes before the performance he admires. Kaden did not limit the pianist's art solely to the stage, yet he was also able to write in a moving manner about the performance and the specifics of the concerts themselves, of which each one was unique. The empathy with which he treated the pianist's efforts was also closely related to his entire artistic outlook, presented both in his literary work and his social activities. The writer displayed a deep respect for work, which was also pointed out by many researchers analyzing his attitude, the one which was shaped during the Young Poland period<sup>31</sup>. It should of course be noted here that the second book in his oeuvre was the collection of short stories entitled *Jobs* (pl. *Zawody*) dating from 1911, devoted to showing the anatomy and the point of ordinary people's work. The work of the artists, although having its own specificity, is also based on physical effort, which he knew very well, being an educated pianist. The attitude to work presented by the writer and the way of perceiving the creative effort of people in Poland through its prism makes a reference, quite naturally, to Stanisław Brzozowski's opinions. Michał Sprusiński, in the context of Kaden's youthful views, pointed out the similarity of his opinions with the Young Poland philosopher of labour, noting that the writer was not directly influenced by Brzozowski, but rather yielded to his great popularity at the time, as he wrote<sup>32</sup>. The young publicist's involvement with the circle of Polish socialists, from which Józef Piłsudski's future political camp also originated, was not without significance for his attitude to manual labor, which will also become apparent in the writer's later novels (casus: *Black Wings*, pl. *Czarne skrzydła*).

Without going into the question of the ideological background of Kaden's views, including political ones, it seems legitimate to claim that he learned to appreciate the work and creative effort by studying the piano and dreaming of a career as a piano virtuoso – of course the one of great standing. The text about the figure of Aleksander Michałowski seems to justify this musical approach to the writer's attitude. The 1929 essay turned from the „occasional text” into an important artistic declaration by Kaden, all the more so because the writer decided to reprint the essay devoted to the outstanding pianist in the volume *At the Table and at the Market* (pl. *Za stołem i na rynku*); in 1932 he decided to collect such seemingly trivial occasional texts. All of the writer's observations in this collec-

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<sup>31</sup> See M. Sprusiński, *Juliusz Kaden Bandrowski...*, p. 20–24.

<sup>32</sup> See *ibidem.*, p. 22.

tion were inspired by current events, such as the death of a distinguished writer or the anniversary of death, the struggle at the town hall or the visit of foreign writers, and yet they created an important record that - which is particularly important - allowed him, an already mature writer, to comment on his own choices, to indicate what was most important in his life, making his journalistic and social activity highly credible. The collection became at the same time a kind of Kaden's intellectual autobiography; the writer took care of "documenting" also his journalistic output. The book displays a great composition, it is divided into four clear parts - *Among friends, Among strangers, At Work, In the Marketplace* - showing different spheres of the writer's exceptional activity, hence the writer himself continually remained the central character. In this somewhat unappreciated volume, both by interwar critics and contemporary researchers, all important stages and periods in the writer's biography not only meet but also intertwine. He decided to open this peculiar collection, made mainly of occasional and official speeches, with an essay on Romanticism, a text that undoubtedly organizes the writer's attitude into a coherent whole. The essay, entitled *Romanticism*, had also been previously published and opened with a volume entitled *Romanticism in music*<sup>33</sup>, edited by the eminent musicologist and promoter of Chopin's works Mateusz Gliński. However, Kaden's understanding of Romanticism was exceptionally broad and so universal that it could precede scientific reflection on virtually all fields of art and almost every human activity. According to the writer, Romanticism provided an ideology meant to reveal the power and strength of every human being, which could not be summarised in any definite statements. At the end of his essay he wrote:

Now do you know what Romanticism means? It is what everyone dreams of, and nobody knows anything about it: a man's eternal love.

Justice.

Eternal hope.

Continuous victory over the past and over everything, over the whole world in the name of the fact that we are so sublime and so vulnerable in our insignificance.

It is so many times that, in the misery of our insignificant existence, inflamed with the feeling of love, we undertake actions that exceed our fragile powers, so many times. That is it that guides us.

It walks, runs, flies forward, saves, loses, destroys - everything, it always precedes us.<sup>34</sup>

Driven by such an ideology, Kaden, as Kazimierz Czachowski rightly pointed out<sup>35</sup>, acted and created. And work became a method of overcoming one's own weaknesses and limitations, which Romanticism defined for his own use - for use, indeed - commanded to ignore. The portrait of Aleksander Michałowski at

<sup>33</sup> See *Romantyzm w muzyce. Monografia zbiorowa*, ed. M. Gliński, published by the monthly "Muzyka", Warszawa 1932, p. 7-10.

<sup>34</sup> J. Kaden-Bandrowski, *Romantyzm*, [in:] idem, *Za stołem i na rynku...*, p. 9-10.

<sup>35</sup> See K. Czachowski, *W ogniu walki o idee* [rev. J. Kaden-Bandrowski, *Za stołem i na rynku*, Lviv 1932], "Czas" 1932, no 7, p. 3.

the piano, inscribed in the writer's broader reflections on literature and art, was given a completely different rank from the one he had on a newspaper page where it had been previously printed. The essay on Michałowski, published in the section *At the Workshop*, became a model and example of the artist's work and activities. The portrait of the pianist perfectly harmonized with Kaden's reflections on art and the artist's vocation. The writer consistently claimed that the most important thing for every artist is to constantly improve himself, his craft and technique<sup>36</sup>. While responding to and arguing with the young Kwadryga poets – this text was also included in the collection – he warned against too much confidence in inspiration and talent, which, in his opinion, should be combined with hard work on the technique and the form of the piece:

You say, gentlemen, that it is a shoemaker's method in those moments, or on those occasions, to resort to craftsmanship.

Do not offend the shoemaker's profession. While writing *Jobs*, I've been learning from a shoemaker for a whole month. I can assure you there are sometimes shoes that are inspired.

Everything there is crafted, the threads perfectly twined, the upper shoe adorably joined to the sole. I have seen how much the craftsmanship is useful, how it makes work faster and boosts inspiration in such an inspired job.

Have you ever heard of a good violinist complaining about having to use his bow, a good pianist complaining about too many piano keys, a great painter feeling repulsion toward canvas? Inspiration, gentlemen, is not afraid of the tough discipline of craftsmanship, is it?<sup>37</sup>

He humorously dampened the feverishness of young inspired poets who disregarded technical issues. This time, acting as an older and more experienced fellow artist, he consistently warned against "artistic" conceit. The writer – conscientiously and responsibly fulfilling also his duties as a teacher (the essay was connected with the literary supplement "The Voice of Truth" which he managed) – tried to teach beginner artists respect for technique and exercises, which in the art of word (literature) seem less obvious than in music:

A literary work, a written work or composition is also a kind of creative work, from the point of view of art the same as a painting, a symphony, or as conducting a symphony, or performing a sonata. Everything depends primarily on talent. But this talent can be enhanced. You can practice trebles or octaves, you can make aware of the proportions of the whole, you can practice and train the operations of associations and images to be the proper ones, you can be shown how to compose a written work and you can gain experience by practicing.

It will not kill art, nor will it kill individuality. On the contrary, it gives them freedom from the pressure of technical hardship, and thus refines them and provides with greater creative possibilities<sup>38</sup>.

<sup>36</sup> See J. Kaden-Bandrowski, *Jedyna rzeczywistość człowieka*, [in:] idem, *Za stołem i na rynku...*, p. 159.

<sup>37</sup> Idem, *W walce z Kwadrygą*, *ibid*, pp. 169–170 [original capitalization retained].

<sup>38</sup> Idem, *Nasza freblówka literacka*, *ibidem*, p. 208.

Craftsmanship remained the cornerstone of art. Kaden's use of examples referring to activities in the field of music confirmed how much the writer and journalist owed to the music school that he attended and the piano practice. These were not empty, just "paper" arguments or grandiose clichés, which he was often accused of because of his elevated style of expression. He was the type of writer who constantly refined and corrected his most important novels himself, and the first edition became for him a "trial copy", requiring constant improvement. He did not consider a published novel (book) as a finished literary text, which after publication – along with its mistakes – seems to be a definitively completed work. His method of work was more characteristic of the efforts made by a pianist, who constantly struggles to perform a piece of music even better. His diligence and his efforts to improve his books earned him respect even from his opponents, who were always very numerous. That was precisely these still "unfinished" books that became for him the sense of creativity, which is often forgotten in anecdotal stories focused on showing the trivia of the writer's life.

It is also worth noting that while speaking about music, Kaden never became a follower of a purely technical perfection. Writing about the participants of the Chopin Competition, which has been held every five years in Warsaw since 1927, he became known as an exceptionally demanding reviewer; n.b. the writer was a member of the committee organizing the first edition of the competition, and in the second edition (1932) he even was a member of the jury. Stanisław Szpinalski and Róża Etkin, Polish participants and winners of the first Chopin Competition, among others, experienced his harsh opinions<sup>39</sup>. And yet, despite the technical deficiencies, which he consistently reproached all young Polish pianists for<sup>40</sup>, he disagreed with the jury's verdict of the third Chopin Competition in 1937. In his opinion, Witold Małcużyński, who won the third prize (the first two prizes were awarded to Soviet pianists), ought to have won. The musician earned Kaden's recognition for his great style of interpretation in line with the Polish piano school, which, in his opinion, should focus on the indications that Fryderyk Chopin himself had left for posterity<sup>41</sup>. At that time, the writer's ambition was to publish Chopin's collective works, with fingering, commented on and explained by our greatest piano masters<sup>42</sup>. Since the first edition of the competition, he hoped that also young Polish pianists, interpreting Chopin's music in their own unique way, would become ambassadors of our culture and the reborn Polish state. All the writer's plans and dreams, including musical ones, were thwarted by the outbreak of war in 1939. In those most tragic moments of his life, during

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<sup>39</sup> Idem, *Na marginesie międzynarodowego konkursu Chopina*, "Świat" 1927, no 6, p. 19.

<sup>40</sup> Idem, *Międzynarodowy konkurs Chopina w Warszawie w styczniu 1927 r.*, "Świat" 1926, no 46, p. 3.

<sup>41</sup> See J. Kaden-Bandrowski, *Na marginesie międzynarodowego konkursu Chopina*, "Świat" 1927, no 6, p. 19.

<sup>42</sup> See *ibidem*.

the occupation and the tragic death of his son Paweł, he found salvation in his work and in Chopin, who he believed to be the most brilliant musician in the world, in company of whom he was not afraid to cry<sup>43</sup>.

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<sup>43</sup> J. Bujnowski, *Juliusz Kaden-Bandrowski. Ostatnie lata życia i twórczości na podstawie listów i relacji*, "Wiadomości" [London], 1965, no 37/38, p. 1–2.

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## Dictionary

Entry: *Juliusz Kaden-Bandrowski*, [in:] *Współcześni polscy pisarze i badacze literatury. Słownik biobibliograficzny*, vol. 4, eds. Jadwiga Czachowska i Alicja Szałagan, Wydawnictwo Szkole i Pedagogiczne, Warszawa 1996, pp. 8–14.

## Juliusz Kaden-Bandrowski o muzyce, pracy i pisaniu – czyli pisarz przy fortepianie

### Abstrakt

Autorka przypomniała postać czołowego pisarza II Rzeczypospolitej, Juliusza Kadena-Bandrowskiego. Odwołała się do jego biografii, ukazując, że fakt zdobycia przez niego w młodości wykształcenia muzycznego mocno wpłynął na postawę artystyczną pisarza. W centrum analizy znalazł się szkic Kadena-Bandrowskiego poświęcony doskonałemu pianiście przełomu dziewiętnastego i dwudziestego wieku Aleksandrowi Michałowskiemu. Tekst ten stał się dla Kadena również ważną deklaracją artystyczną. Autorka odwołała się także do krytycznych tekstów Juliusza Kadena-Bandrowskiego z początkowego okresu jego literackiej kariery, aby pokazać szersze stanowisko pisarza wobec sztuki. Przypomniany został także związek pisarza z Międzynarodowym Konkursem Pianistycznym im. Fryderyka Chopina, który odbywa się od 1927 w Warszawie; Kaden był członkiem komitetu organizującego pierwszą edycję tego konkursu.

**Słowa kluczowe:** dwudziestolecie międzywojenne, Juliusz Kaden-Bandrowski, Aleksander Michałowski, publicystyka, muzyka, pianista.