

Mieczysław Karłowicz (1876-1909) – life and work



From Wiszniewo to Warsaw

Mieczysław Karłowicz was born on 11 December, 1876, in Wiszniewo, in what is now Belarus. His father, Jan Aleksander Karłowicz (1836- 1903), was a respected ethnologist and linguist. He co-created the eight-volume *Dictionary of Polish Language* (1900-1927), which contains approximately 280,000 entries. Among Jan Karłowicz's numerous interests, music played a significant role. From 1847 to 1853, he attended piano lessons with Stanisław Moniuszko. Jan Karłowicz also played the cello, composed music, described folk instruments, and even designed a new way of marking notes. Mieczysław's

mother, **Irena from Sulistrowski (1847-1922)**, a professional singer, also took care of the composer's three older siblings: sisters **Stanisława (1866-1881)** and **Wanda (1868-1902)** and brother **Edmund (1871-1919)**.

Mieczysław Karłowicz's parents came from wealthy noble families. Mrs. Irena's family bore the Lubicz coat of arms, and Mr. Jan's the Ostoja coat of arms. Both of Mieczysław's parents were also knowledgeable about music and enjoyed performing it. They were fond of the songs of Stanisław Moniuszko, in which singing Ms. Irena was accompanied by Mr. Jan on the piano. Chamber concerts were also held in the manor house in Wiszniewo, where Jan Karłowicz played the cello. Little Mieczysław was also surrounded by Lithuanian and Belarusian folk songs – they were sung by a nanny called Janowa. The composer's cousin, Henryk Śniadecki, described her as a "treasury of songs sung in a small but sonorous, clear, high soprano voice"¹.

This is how the composer, called Mieczys by the household, spent six years of his life in the Wiszniewo estate. A peaceful childhood ended with the death of his sister, Stanisława, who died of scarlet fever in 1881. The grieving family was in for another change. In the spring

¹ T. Baranowski, *Mieczysław Karłowicz – biography*, full version on the Polish Music Portal, https://portalmuzykipolskiej.pl/pl/osoba/2478-mieczyslaw-Karłowicz/biografia/2-biografia-pelna#_ftnref1, accessed: 17.11.2025.

of 1882, Jan Karłowicz finally decided that he could not develop in the east. He thought about working on the aforementioned Polish language dictionary as part of his academic work. He sold his family estate and eventually moved to Germany with his entire family. **The Karłowicz family spent the years 1882-1885 in Heidelberg.** In September 1882, young Mieczysław began attending a kindergarden, or "**Froebel's kindergarden,**" a German kindergarden founded by German pedagogue **Friedrich Wilhelm Froebel.** Froebel's kindergartens had two advantages: they respected the child's dignity (at that time, no one spoke about children's rights) and taught perseverance – completing tasks to the end. "Perhaps it was in the Heidelberg kindergarden that Mieczysław developed the innate systematic approach and sense of duty that would characterise him later in life"².

In September 1883, the young Karłowicz became a student at the **Krönlein School,** and from December, he attended violin lessons with the German pedagogue **Rosenkranz.**

The parents took care of the cultural development of the ailing Mieczysław. The boy visited the surroundings of Heidelberg and watched children's theater performances. In 1884, he saw his first opera, *Carmen* by Georges Bizet, in Mannheim. He also often went to concerts. In 1885, he heard the recently composed *Symphony No. 3* by **Johannes Brahms** and works by **Carl Maria von Weber.** Karłowicz never liked Brahms' works, but he appreciated the works of Carl Maria von Weber.

In 1885, the Karłowicz family, with Mieczysław and Edmund (Wanda was studying in Geneva), moved to Prague for a few months. At the end of April 1886, they moved to Dresden for more than a year. Moving wasn't easy; Mr. Karłowicz took with him a home library of about... 4,000 books. Aside from logistical issues, the frequent changes of residence were quite stressful for young Mieczysław and made it difficult for him to build lasting relationships with his peers.

Mrs. Irena ran an open house. The Karłowicz salon was visited by, among others: **Ludwik Krzywicki** – a precursor of Polish sociology, **Zygmunt Gloger** – a historian, ethnographer, creator of the *Encyclopedia of Old Polish Illustrated*, **Wacław Nalkowski** – a great geographer, publicist and father of writer **Zofia Nalkowska**, **Wojciech Natanson** – a theater critic, translator and writer, **Tadeusz Korzon** – a historian, **Aleksander Świątchowski** – a writer, philosopher and publicist.

² A. Woźniakowska, *Karłowicz*, Kraków 2023, p. 17.

It turned out that a permanent life abroad was not meant for the Karłowicz family. In the summer months of 1887, the family came to Warsaw. Initially, they lived at Włodzimierska Street (nowadays: Czackiego), later they rent a flat at 31 Chmielna Street. "Among the salon guests at Chmielna, you could meet writers, painters, and of course musicians, because Jan Karłowicz continued to organize home concerts, which gained intensity when he became a member of the "Lutnia" Singing Society founded by Piotr Maszyński, and eventually its vice president"³.

What was Mieczysław's life like? To organize his knowledge, he first took private lessons, and learned to play the violin under the guidance of **Jan Jakowski**. In January 1888, teenage Mieczysław began his education at **Wojciech Górski's prestigious private Real School**. The institution had a mathematical and natural science profile, and also took care of the physical development of students in a modern way. Interestingly, as a private school, it could not issue matriculation certificates, so its graduates took external exams at a government gymnasium.

The matriculation exam is an important event, but 1889 will be a turning point for young Karłowicz.



2. *A young Karłowicz with his violin*

Source:

<http://www.pinkwart.pl/Karłowicz/koncert.htm>, 21.11.2025.

What came first: the violin, composition, or the Tatras? (1889-1895)

In the summer of 1889, Mieczysław Karłowicz spent his vacation in Zakopane with his mother and siblings. It was his first time in the Tatras. Under the guidance of the highlander mountain guide, **Jan Stopka**, the 12-year-old boy hikes through the Czerwone Wierchy, to Morskie Oko via Zawrat and the Dolina Pięciu Stawów. Karłowicz stayed in Zakopane from July 11 to August 28, 1889. Karłowicz was probably already impressed by the mountains at that time, since he would often return to the Tatras.

For now, however, Mieczysław comes to Warsaw and changes his violin teacher. **In the fall of 1889**, he began studying with virtuoso **Stanisław Barcewicz**. His playing was compared to the concerts of Henryk Wieniawski or Pablo de Sarasate. The professor graduated from Moscow Conservatory with a gold medal and performed throughout Europe.

³ Ibid., p. 22.

He combined high expectations with an individual approach to his students. During their several years of cooperation, Barcewicz noticed on the one hand Karłowicz's great abilities, and on the other hand, elements that excluded his solo career. What was Karłowicz's violin playing like? "It was not distinguished by outstanding temperament, nor did it possess virtuosic bravura, but it was brought to a very high degree of technical proficiency, very pure in intonation, restrained, and thoroughly musical in phrasing"⁴.

On 17 November, 1890, Jan Karłowicz wrote in his diary: "First piano lesson with Mieczysław"⁵. As we know, music surrounded Mieczysław from the beginning, the composer's older siblings also learned to play the piano, so it's hard to believe that the boy had no contact with the keyboard before.

In any case, formally, the 14-year-old composer only took piano and harmony lessons, initially from his father, a professional – Jan Karłowicz translated Ernst Friedrich Richter's *Principles of Harmony* in 1863. On his father's name day, Mieczysław created *Chant du soir* for violin and piano (June 1891). **This is Karłowicz's oldest surviving composition.**

In the second half of 1891, the teenage Mieczysław wrote a second piece for violin and piano, *Der Traum*. He later composed the song *Cudowny kwiat* to the lyrics by **Czesław Jankowski**. Among Karłowicz's early compositions are the piano piece *Scherzando in A minor* dedicated to his mother (1892) and the song *Zbudź się* with lyrics by **Wiktor Gomułcki**. Mieczysław's early works did not yet showcase his great compositional talent, but they did demonstrate a growing familiarity with the musical rules of a teenage creator.

Karłowicz's comprehensive development took place among his schoolmates at Górski's school, his cousins, and the children of his parents' acquaintances, but Mieczysław had only one real friend – a year older **Kazimierz Prószyński**. The boys came from similar families. Kazimierz's father, Konrad Prószyński, founded the National Education Society and wrote the first modern primer. Kazimierz was an amateur pianist and tried to compose. Above all, as a graduate of the Polytechnic in Liege, Belgium, he became the father of Polish cinematography. Among his several inventions, we can find the **pleograph** – a device used to take pictures and play back films, constructed before the publication of the Lumière brothers' patent, and

⁴ J. Mechanisz, *Mieczysław Karłowicz and his music*, Warsaw 1990.

⁵ A. Adolf, *Mieczysław Karłowicz. Chronicle of the life of an artist and mountaineer*, Cracow 1949, after: *Ibid.*, p. 25.

the **autolector** – a device that allows people with poor vision to read text. Kazimierz Prószyński (1875-1945) died in the Mauthausen-Gusen concentration camp. It is worth getting to know the figure of this outstanding Pole, who fortunately is emerging from the darkness of oblivion⁶.

Let's return to music. Karłowicz continues to perfect his violin technique and expand his repertoire, although he does not enjoy performing. In 1894 in Pinsk, he performs mainly for his family and acquaintances, playing the *Concerto in E minor* by Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy and the *Spanish Dances* by Pablo de Sarasate. The young violinist is accompanied by **Ludwik Urstein** at the piano. In 1895, he plays for the public one last time – unfortunately, we do not know the program of this event. At the same time, Karłowicz develops his compositional skills. In 1894, he begins studying counterpoint and composition under the guidance of **Gustaw Roguski**. Mieczysław wants to develop his skills in a comprehensive way. He plans to study composition with Heinrich Urban, violin with the Hungarian virtuoso **Józef Joachim** (a friend of Johannes Brahms), and musicology and philosophy at German universities. To this end, in the fall of 1895, he leaves for Berlin.

And yet – composition! (1895 – 1902)



3. *Mieczysław Karłowicz on the stamp from 2008.*

Source:

<https://myvimu.com/exhibit/54703902-mieczyslaw-karlowicz>, 21.11.2025.

Mieczysław doesn't get into Józef Joachim's university violin class. This is a great disappointment for the young musician. Fortunately, studying with Heinrich Urban proves to be a good choice. Why? The demanding German professor didn't impose his musical aesthetics on his students, but accompanied them in finding and developing their own compositional language. Every week, students and graduates of professor Urban met in a restaurant to present their opinions and exchange experiences. It is worth noting that the very experienced professor – Urban was almost 60 years old – educated other Poles: **Ignacy Jan Paderewski** – a piano virtuoso, a composer and the Prime Minister of Poland, **Wanda Landowska** - the famous harpsichordist, as well as the composer and **Józef Hofmann** - a piano virtuoso, director of the famous Curtis Institute of Music and an extraordinary inventor (70 patents).

It was Józef Hofmann who created the paper clip and also improved the car windshield wiper. "Hand-operated wipers on cars were replaced by automatic wipers (it's worth adding that Hofmann was inspired by the metronome when creating them)"⁷.

⁶ Based on: https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kazimierz_Pr%C3%B3szy%C5%84ski, 6.11.2025.

⁷ <https://dipp.com.pl/blog/historia-wycieraczek-samochodowych>, accessed 21.11.2025.

Let's return to Karłowicz. He took full advantage of Berlin's cultural offerings—he regularly attended concerts, improved his violin playing on his own, and listened to lectures on physics. Unfortunately, Mieczysław was afflicted with **agoraphobia**—a fear of being in the company of others or in open spaces. The condition ruled out a career as a musician. Visits to his parents, and above all, reading of Jules Payot's *The Education of the Will*, alleviated the symptoms of the disease. At the same time, it became increasingly clear that Karłowicz would become a composer.

During his studies with Heinrich Urban, our protagonist diligently completes his homework, creating more works. First, the *Piano Waltz in G major* is composed. Mieczysław also writes three rondos for this instrument. He also creates miniatures for violin and piano, as well as a *Serenade* for cello and piano. Most of these instrumental compositions come from his pen in 1896; simultaneously, by 1898, Mieczysław writes over 30 songs on his own initiative. Only 22 have survived to this day in the form of copies and prints⁸. These include two cycles: **Six Songs op. 1** (1895-96), **Ten Songs op. 3** (1896), and individual pieces **Beautiful Songs op. 4** (1898), *Don't believe what people say* (1892), *Sometimes, when I dream half asleep for a long time* (1895), *With the new spring* (1895), *Rusty leaves fall from the trees* (1896), *Under the sycamore* (1898).

In ten songs, the composer used text by Kazimierz Przerwa-Tetmajer. Among them, it is particularly worth knowing: *I Remember the Quiet, Bright, Golden Days* op. 1 no. 5, *Speak to Me Again* op. 3 no. 1, *Across the Wide, Wide Sea* op. 3 no. 9. These songs are filled with longing, and even the specter of tragic death appears in them. Renowned musicologist professor Mieczysław Tomaszewski summarized: "Karłowicz's song takes place in the category of mortal seriousness"⁹.

Where did Karłowicz's unhappy love come from? The composer was reportedly deeply in love with his cousin, Ludwika Śniadecka, according to family friend Alina Świdorska and the composer's cousin Helena Romer-Ochenkowska. The unlucky love was married to Mr. Zaniewski and kept silent about her relationship with her cousin. Karłowicz revealed the incestuous love in the symphonic poem *Stanisław and Anna Oświecimowie* op. 12 (1907).

⁸ The autographs were destroyed during the World War II. Based on: A. Woźniakowska, *Karłowicz*, Cracow 2023, p. 47.

⁹ M. Tomaszewski, *Over Mieczysław Karłowicz's Songs*, in: *Polish Music and Modernism*, Cracow 1981.

Intriguingly, the work is inspired by a painting by Stanisław Bergman, which Mieczysław admired in ...1893!

Let us return to vocal lyrics. In 1897, **the Warsaw publishing house Gebethner and Wolff** published *Six songs* op. 1 by Karłowicz. The set includes three poems by Kazimierz Przerwa-Tetmajer: *Disillusion; I Remember Quiet, Clear Golden Days, My Soul is Sad* and individual works by Kazimierz Gliński (*Saddened*), Juliusz Słowacki (*Whence the First Stars*) and Maria Konopnicka (*In the Snow*). In 1898, also in the capital, Michał Arct published *The second songbook*– six songs from op. 3. In the collection **Ten songs** op. 3 we find: five Tetmajer poems (*Speak to me Still; It Goes Over the Fields; On the Calm Dark Sea; In the Calm of the Evening; Over the Wide Sea*) and lyrics by Józef Waśniewski (*From Erotica*), Jan Iwański (*Weep not Over Me*), Zygmunt Krasieński (*Before the Eternal Night*), Adam Asnyk (*The Enchanted Princess*) and Heinrich Heine in Maria Konopnicka's translation (*Asleep in the Splendors of the Night*). Karłowicz's songs exist in many arrangements and are an important part of the composer's work.

Intensive lifestyle weakened Mieczysław. In the summer of 1896, the artist went to Nałęczów to rest. He spent the second part of his vacation in Karolinów with his mother's sister, aunt Romer. After returning to Warsaw, he had an appendix attack, which stopped his further Berlin education until the new year. Fortunately, the treatment was effective. Moreover, Karłowicz's stay in Warsaw allowed him to participate in a concert, where his songs were professionally performed for the first time. On 5 December 1896, the soloist of the Warsaw and Lviv opera, mezzo-soprano **Justyna Machwicówna**, accompanied by the pianist **Ludwik Urstein**, performed three of Karłowicz's songs: *My Soul is Sad; On the Calm Dark Sea* and *In the Snow*. The composer wrote to his friend, historian Samuel Adalberg: "The audience and critics were very friendly towards these products of my creativity"¹⁰.

At the beginning of 1897, Karłowicz resumed his studies under Heinrich Urban. The professor assigned him to compose a **Serenade for string orchestra**, which Mieczysław completed in 1897. *Serenade* op. 2 has four movements and was premiered on 15 April 1897 in Berlin. The event was one of the student concerts of Professor Urban's class, initiated by his pupil **Seweryn Berson**. Thanks to small monthly contributions, students could hear their

¹⁰ *Mieczysław Karłowicz in letters and memories*, compiled by Henryk Anders, Kraków 1960., after: *Ibid.*, p. 53.

compositions performed by professionals. At concerts, critics, at the professor's request, did not write reviews until the young artists had completed their studies. The *Serenade* was first performed by the Berliner Philharmonisches Orchester under the direction of Heinrich Urban. This was Mieczysław's orchestral debut. Biographer of the composer Anna Woźniakowska states that it is Karłowicz's most frequently performed instrumental work¹¹.

The young composer was also pleased with the positive review of his first songbook. It appeared in “**Echo Muzyczne, Teatralne i Artystyczne**”, a magazine to which Karłowicz also contributed texts from 1895.

Karłowicz could afford to publish his compositions. In July 1897, **the Berlin publishing Challier's house** released the score, instrumental parts, and a piano reduction for four hands of the aforementioned *Serenade* Op. 2, dedicated to Heinrich Urban. The available sheet music allowed Karl Mayder's band to perform the piece in Warsaw's Dolina Szwajcarska in September. Karłowicz, who attended the concert, was pleased to read in “Echo Muzyczne, Teatralne i Artystyczne” that “The serenade proves that the talent is developing. We wholeheartedly applaud this, looking forward to more promising works”¹².

After spending the summer in Italy, Switzerland, and mostly Lithuania, Karłowicz met violinist, composer, and chemist Henryk Opieński when he returned to Berlin in the fall. After Samuel Adalberg's departure to France in the spring of 1898, Opieński became Karłowicz's supporter. Later, Mieczysław entrusted him with the duties of correspondent for the already familiar “Echo Muzyczne, Teatralne i Artystyczne”.

Karłowicz began studying instrumentation with professor Urban. The advice of a master is not enough for a young artist. Mieczysław paid musicians from the Berlin Philharmonic to teach him how to play, especially brass instruments. This is how he most personally and thoroughly explored the possibilities of the brass section, which is clearly audible in his later works.

Karłowicz's already fragile health was weakened by his intense life. On the other hand, it was his poor health that allowed him to avoid military service in the Tsarist army. After spending the summer in Nałęczów, where he composed *The most beautiful songs*, Op. 4, to a

¹¹ Based on: Ibid, p. 52.

¹² A. Chybiński, *Mieczysław Karłowicz. Chronicle of the life of an artist and mountaineer*, Kraków 1949, after: Ibid., p. 53.

poem by Adam Asnyk, Mieczysław and his parents traveled to Italy in the fall. He spent Christmas and New Year in Nervi. In October 1898, he created the song *Under the Sycamore to the folk text*. **It was his last song – Karłowicz concluded that the text limited the music.**

At the beginning of 1899, after returning to Germany, he moved to a new place – at Kantstrasse 56 in the Charlottenburg district of Berlin. "The gate of the property had the sign 'Hausieren und Musizieren verboten' (peddlers and musicians are not allowed), which always made Mieczyslaw's guests laugh"¹³.

In the same year, 1899, Karłowicz began working on music for *The White Dove*, a dramatic poem by Jozafat Nowiński. The young composer knew the playwright, and inspired by the literary work, he created a *Prologue* for a large symphony orchestra and an *Intermezzo* for a smaller ensemble. The drama tells the tragic love story of the knight Carlo Carraro and the princess Bianca from Molena. After the death of his beloved, Carraro commissions a marble monument: it shows Bianca, over whom Christ holds a white dove.

The aforementioned *Prologue* was first performed on 14 April 1900 at the Beethoven-Saal in Berlin during the annual concert of Professor Urban's students. The *Prologue* was performed at the Warsaw Grand Theatre on 7 December 1900, conducted by the institution's director, Emil Młynarski. German and Polish critics spoke favorably of the composition, although composer Zygmunt Noskowski criticized Karłowicz for being influenced by German music, particularly that of Richard Wagner, on the Vistula River. However, the reviewer from "Echo Muzyczne, Teatralne i Artystyczne" appreciated the colorful instrumentation of the piece. The prologue to the White Dove is known in music literature as *Bianka from Molena*.

For Karłowicz, the time was approaching when he would complete his composition studies. According to Heinrich Urban, the diploma work was to be in the form of a symphony. Thanks to his education in Berlin and his travels throughout Europe, Mieczysław was familiar with the latest musical styles. He worked with great dedication, as he wanted to present the composition at his professor's concert in 1901. However, this did not happen. In the spring of that year, Karłowicz visited his ailing father in Sicily and came to Wiesbaden with his parents.

He then went to Lithuania to attend the funeral of a relative in his father's place. At that time, his *Symphony* was being rehearsed in Berlin, but Professor Urban ordered that it be

¹³ Ibid., p. 55.

revised. Mieczysław made the corrections mostly on his own, as Heinrich Urban unexpectedly passed away on 24 November 1901.

Karłowicz completed his *Symphony No. 1 in E minor, "Rebirth"* in July 1902. The premiere took place on 21.03.1903 in Berlin. The piece was performed by the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by the composer.

The *Symphony No. 1 in E minor, "Rebirth,"* is a programmatic work, although the composer did not reveal the content before the premiere. As a result, there was a misunderstanding: a critic in Warsaw probably thought that Karłowicz had created a "Renaissance Symphony." In reality, "renaissance" was not about a historical era, but about the renewal of the soul.

The composer published the program for the piece in the Lviv newspaper *Słowo Polskie* before the concert on April 7, 1903. The first part of the work reads:

"Requiem aeternam... (...)

Everything is shattered: everything that the existence so far was based on; sorrow and endless sadness flood the half-fainting soul. What to do, which way to go? (...)

Slowly, the soul shakes off the faintness; a strong protest against discouragement awakens within it, and at the same time, an endlessly long, gray road opens before its eyes, leading to the foundations of future existence: to rebirth"¹⁴.

The author of the composer's biography, Anna Woźniakowska, emphasizes the individual character of the composition and its pioneering nature – it was the first Polish Romantic program symphony. Woźniakowska notes that the work of the 26-year-old composer already shows "all the characteristics of his later, mature creative work - a fondness for dark string instrument colors, original harmonics, and 'choirs' of wind instruments"¹⁵.

The reviews were very favorable. It seemed that Karłowicz would remain faithful to the symphony form, but he chose a more free-form musical genre. However, before he creates his first symphonic poem, he will return to his youthful passion – the violin.

¹⁴ A. Wightman, *Young Poland and the musical fin de siècle*, translated by E. Gabryś, Krakow 1996, after: *Ibid.*, p. 66.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 66-67.

Return of the violin



Karłowicz returned to the violin thanks to professor Stanisław Barcewicz, who was his close friend. To be precise: the young composer wanted to create a violin concerto for his violin master. He worked on the piece in the summer and fall of 1902, while also finishing the aforementioned symphony. In search of peace, he went to Zakopane in the summer of 1902.

4. The cover of Karłowicz's *Violin Concerto*

Source: <https://polmic.pl/pl/nawosci-wydawnicze/nuty/koncert-skrzypcowy-a-dur-op-8--karnowicz-mieczyslaw>, dostęp 21.11.2025.

Mieczysław moved into the villa "Fortunka" in Dolny Bystrem. But now he was composing, not climbing. After all, the *Concerto* was his first independent work. Professor Barcewicz received a copy of *Violin Concerto in A major* on December 15, 1902,

with the dedication: "To Professor Stanisław Barcewicz, in admiration and gratitude."

Preparations for the aforementioned March concert in Berlin have begun. It is worth noting that Karłowicz himself organized, paid for, and conducted from the podium the event in which the *Violin Concerto in A major*, the *Symphony "Rebirth No. 1,"* and an earlier work, *The White Dove*, were premiered. Karłowicz had no experience as a conductor, and the concert took place after only one rehearsal.

However, according to the words of the soloist, Stanisław Barcewicz: "he performed this difficult task excellently, maintaining his composure and extracting all dynamic shades. His compositions were received very favorably. (...) The *Violin Concerto* was the most popular; I was even forced to repeat the entire second movement as an encore"¹⁶.

The *Violin Concerto in A major* is a very demanding work for a soloist, thoroughly virtuosic, and at the same time modern, colorful, and well-composed. Anna Woźniakowska emphasizes the orchestra's part, which perfectly complements the soloist.

The second part of the *Concerto* was performed during the aforementioned concert in Lviv on 7 April 1903. The composition was also presented in the Vienna Musikverein hall, as well as in Warsaw. The audience received it very warmly.

¹⁶ *Mieczysław Karłowicz in letters and memories*, compiled by Henryk Anders, Kraków 1960., after: *Ibid.*, s. 70.

However, critics' opinions were divided: some heard Wagner and Tchaikovsky's copying, while others emphasized the composer's invention. This does not change the fact that Karłowicz's piece is one of the few Polish violin concertos of the 20th century, still often performed and recorded today. One can be glad that history has fairly evaluated the work of the 26-year-old creator.



1 Warsaw Music Society, зал. 1871,
ul. Morskie Oko 2

Source:
<https://sekretywarszawy.pl/warszawskie-towarzystwo-muzyczne>, 21.11.2025.

"Warsaw, You and I" (1901-1904)

Karłowicz visited Warsaw more and more often. He completed his studies under Heinrich Urban, and his ailing father required his care, and the son assisted him in editing *The Dictionary of Polish Dialects*. At the same time, an unprecedented event took place in the life of the capital – on 5 November 1901, the Warsaw Philharmonic was opened. At the inaugural concert, Ignacy Jan Paderewski performed as a soloist, presenting his *Piano Concerto in A minor* alongside works by Frédéric Chopin.

The orchestra was conducted by Emil Młynarski, presenting works by Stanisław Moniuszko, Władysław Żeleński, Zygmunt Stojowski, and Zygmunt Noskowski to the capital's audience.

Karłowicz regularly attended concerts at the Warsaw Philharmonic. One December evening, he heard the *Prologue to the White Dove* under the direction of Młynarski in a performance that was unsatisfactory to him (let's add that Karłowicz was a perfectionist). The composer himself also conducted his *Serenade* in December, with much better results.

However, Karłowicz accused the Philharmonic's management of a too low artistic level – looking for money, the Philharmonic also held parties and balls – and more careful preparation of works by foreign composers. He ultimately decided to present his works at the Philharmonic only during concerts he personally paid for and conducted, outside of the institution's regular events.

Karłowicz found a place for himself in the Warsaw Music Society, an organization founded in 1871. His father, Jan Karłowicz, created the Stanisław Moniuszko Section in 1891, the founder of the Society. In 1899, the Society also created the Fryderyk Chopin Section. Jan Karłowicz was active in both fields.

Mieczysław joined the WMS in 1893, before his studies in Berlin. Let us recall that it was at a concert of this institution that his songs were performed professionally, and later the Polish premiere of *Serenade Op. 2* took place.

Karłowicz, an introvert, revealed in WMS his social streak inherited from his father. He created a reading room for Polish and foreign music journals (the latter he paid for mostly out of his own pocket) and organized and led a string orchestra. In mid-January 1903, he began working with an orchestra of nearly 40 people. Intensive rehearsals already resulted in a concert in February at the Reduta Rooms of the Grand Theatre.

Another performance took place in March, and in October 1903, the orchestra presented a truly demanding piece to Warsaw audiences: Edvard Grieg's *Holberg Suite*. Critics gave the performance a very positive review, highlighting the band's musicality.

Mieczysław Karłowicz also took care of a worthy commemoration of Fryderyk Chopin. He met with composer's nephew, Antoni Jędrzejewicz. The Ciechowski family, Maria Ciechomska being the granddaughter of Chopin's sister Ludwika Jędrzejewiczowa, lent Karłowicz the now famous but then little-known correspondence between Fryderyk and the Wodziński family, the well-known file of letters marked "my misery." He traveled to places associated with Chopin and collaborated with a researcher of his work, **Ferdinand Hoesick**.

Karłowicz's persistent work paid off – in 1903, the Fryderyk Chopin Section published the *Unpublished Memories of Chopin*, edited and founded by Karłowicz. The book includes *Chopin's letters to his family and from his family to him, letters from Madame Sand and her daughter, letters from the Wodzińskis, letters from Chopin's students and acquaintances, and correspondence from Madame Stirling. Miscellaneous*. Although the title is somewhat rich, it only partially reflects the impressive content, as the book includes letters and autographs from Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, Ferenc Liszt, Robert Schumann, and Victor Hugo, as well as transcripts of Chopin's birth certificate and his caricatures. The collection has one flaw: in keeping with the customs of the time, Karłowicz included summaries of the correspondence in place of some of the original letters. On the other hand, the Polish and French versions of the *Memories* proved invaluable: they preserved the correspondence, the originals of which were mostly destroyed during World War II.

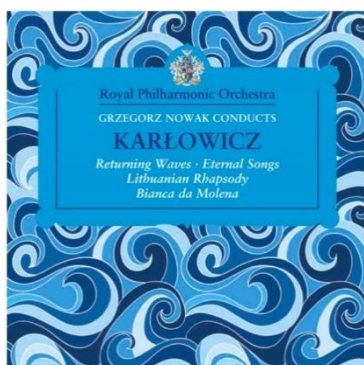
Additionally, Karłowicz donated all his financial rewards to the impoverished granddaughters of Ludwika Jędrzejewiczowa.

Karłowicz, who was busy, created a melodeclination of *The Angelus* in 1902, with words by Kazimierz Przerwa-Tetmajer. He did not have much time for social contacts, but it is worth mentioning three of his important acquaintances. The first was **Grzegorz Fitelberg**, a conductor who promoted the composer's work. The second was the composer **Ludomir Różycki**. The third was the musicologist **Adolf Chybiński**, with whom Karłowicz was happy to correspond and befriend. Chybiński greatly appreciated Karłowicz's work, and later became his best biographer.

In 1903, Karłowicz experienced two tragic events: the death of his father Jan and his sister Wanda. Jan Karłowicz passed away on 14 June 1903. After the funeral and settling his father's publishing affairs, Mieczysław spent his last summer with his mother Irena in their family home in Wiszniewo. At the beginning of September, he arrived in Warsaw. On 13 September 1903, Mieczysław received a telegram about the death of his sister Wanda Wasilewska, who suffered from a mental illness. The farewell ceremony took place in Lviv, the Wasilewskis' hometown. Then, Mieczysław went to Zakopane, where he stayed at the "Fortunka" boarding house overlooking the Bystre.

After a brief stay in the mountains, Karłowicz returned to WMS matters. He planned to build a headquarters for the Society, as renting the Reduta Rooms at the Grand Theater was becoming increasingly burdensome. According to the composer, the money was to come from concerts. The first one took place in January 1904.

However, Karłowicz did not lose sight of his main occupation – composing. Ultimately, in December 1903, he decided to resign from conducting the WMS orchestra. It is worth noting



6. The CD's cover from 2017.

Source:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AXDVzArCuA>, 21.11.2025.

that in February 1904, he led a composer's concert at the Vienna Musikverein. He then went to Croatia for a few months. Here he began a new stage of his life – work on his first symphonic poem.

"Returning Waves" (1904-1907)

"Among the bitter thoughts of a man, mercilessly torn by fate and nearing the end of his days, a memory of the spring of life, illuminated by the sunny smile of happiness, suddenly comes to life. One by one, the images move. But everything perishes, and bitterness

and sorrow once again ensnare the weary soul”¹⁷. With these words addressed to his friend Adolf Chybiński, Karłowicz expressed the idea of his new composition – the symphonic poem “*Returning Waves*”. In a more detailed composition program, published only five years later, even greater regret is evident. The composer's researcher, Anna Woźniakowska, emphasizes the connection between the text and the music itself and the supposed mental state of the... 27 - year-old creator.

Karłowicz, who had settled in Croatia, visited Venice with his brother-in-law, Zygmunt Wasilewski, and, with his mother, who arrived in the spring, visited Dubrovnik and Sarajevo, among other places. Upon his return to Warsaw in June 1904, he worked in the WMS (he wanted to create a biweekly "Lutnista", a magazine independent of the capital's music environment) and arrived at the shore of the “*Returning Waves*”. Before presenting the completed work to his audience, he stops again in Zakopane. There, he met Włodzimierz Boldireff-Strzemiński, a student at the Lviv Polytechnic, with whom Mieczysław would often hike in the Tatra Mountains.

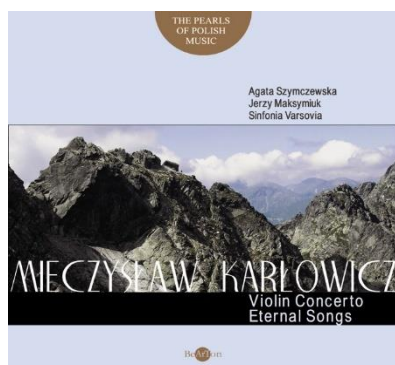
Karłowicz, who was at odds with the authorities of the Philharmonic, paid for the hall and the orchestra to perform his *Symphony "Rebirth"*, *Violin Concerto* with Stanisław Barcewicz as soloist, and his latest work, the symphonic poem “*Returning Waves*”, on November 28, 1904. Reviews were ambivalent. Mieczysław's compositional abilities were appreciated, but he was criticized for lacking an individual musical language, and the poem was described as consisting of "pieces"¹⁸. The audience's applause, flowers, and a special baton with the inscription "From colleagues in the committee of the Music Society" given to the composer by the committee's president, Prince Konstanty Lubomirski, did not offset the voices of incomprehension. Karłowicz planned to leave Warsaw. At the end of January 1905, he left for Berlin to hear beautiful concerts. "He admired *Don Juan* by Strauss once again, listened to symphonies by Schumann, piano concertos by Chopin and Ruggero Leoncavallo. Mahler's *Fifth Symphony in C-sharp minor*, although presented magnificently by Artur Nikisch, left a stunned and aching head. He compared the experience of listening to her to being in a steel mill. He couldn't find meaning in the work of the Viennese symphonist”¹⁹.

¹⁷ *Mieczysław Karłowicz in letters and memories*, compiled by Henryk Anders, Kraków 1960., after: *Ibid.*, p. 92.

¹⁸ A. Poliński, *From Music. Composer concert by Mr. M. Karłowicz*, "Warsaw Courier" 1904, no. 331.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* p. 100.

Karłowicz continues his German journey. He travels through Leipzig and Dresden to **Munich**, where he spends time with Adolf Chybiński. In Munich, he not only listens to concerts, but also visits the great collections of paintings - the Old Pinacotheca and the museum of antique art - the Glyptothek. He observes winter mountain tourists and makes plans for his own hikes. He is aware of the risk, as he talks about the will for the first time. Upon returning to Warsaw, he again falls into the work vortex at WMS. **At the beginning of May 1905, he becomes the director of the Society.** In October, a Chopin concert is held with a reading by Henryk Dobrzycki, president of the Chopin Society. About the origins of the composer, Fryderyk Chopin. Later Karłowicz organizes a concert commemorating Henryk Wieniawski. At the end of 1905, WMS presents memorabilia of Chopin and Moniuszko. However, unable to reconcile his composing and social work, Karłowicz resigned as director of the Warsaw Music Society at the end of 1905. This doesn't mean that he's breaking with the institution. In the spring of 1906, he initiated the Collective Music Section, which created a string orchestra and amateur chamber ensembles. These ensembles participated in a competition to perform a quartet of Viennese classics. Fun fact: the men's and women's teams were scored separately. Karłowicz participated in the jury's work. In 1907, also at the composer's earlier initiative, the Scientific-Musical Section was established. However, having resigned from his position as director of WMS, Karłowicz devotes himself to his passions – mountains, photography, and composition.



7. The CD's cover form 2008.

Source:
[https://www.bearton.pl/en/sklep/mieczyslaw-karlowicz-violin-concerto-eternal-songs/#lightbox\[product-gallery\]/0](https://www.bearton.pl/en/sklep/mieczyslaw-karlowicz-violin-concerto-eternal-songs/#lightbox[product-gallery]/0), 21.11.2025.

"Eternal Songs" (1904-1906)

Karłowicz probably began work on his second symphonic poem in late October 1904. Completed in February 1906, *Eternal Songs* is, in fact, three pieces of this genre: *"Song of Eternal Longing"*, *"Song of Love"* and *Death*, and *"Song of Eternal-Being"*. Interestingly, the creator never revealed the program of his work. He may have thought that the titles of the compositions were enough.

The composer's biographer, Anna Woźniakowska, points to the creator's pantheistic ideas, while also recalling Karłowicz's motto, contained in the original score. The second part was preceded by the words: "Here I stand before you to complain about my fate," and the finale was announced by the words: "Greatness, power, majesty, eternity,

inevitability"²⁰. Unfortunately, the autograph of the score was destroyed during World War II, and in 1908, when preparing the print of the composition, Karłowicz omitted the above considerations.

In 1905, Grzegorz Fitelberg and Ludomir Różycki founded the Young Polish Composers' Publishing Company. Apolinary Szeluto and Karol Szymanowski joined them. Supported by Prince Władysław Lubomirski, the present foundation was to organize concerts and publish the latest works. Karłowicz knew about this activity, but he did not join it. He paid for the printing of his song *Under the Sycomore*, which was published by the company.

What fate awaited the "*Eternal Songs*"? That is still to come. For now, let us go forward with Karłowicz and visit the Tatra Mountains.

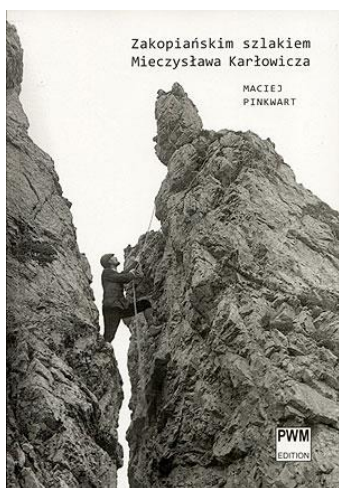
"A Song of Love..."

The young composer visited Zakopane every summer since 1902, but he mainly composed there. However, he was a member of the Tatra Society, and most importantly, he took beautiful mountain photos. Karłowicz's photographs were so well-received and popular that the composer joked that he would change his profession.

During his stay in Munich, Karłowicz prepared for a longer stay in the Tatras: he bought a new backpack, climbing gear, and a modern camera. He spent three months in Zakopane in the summer of 1906. He lived in the now-demolished villa "Pod Białym Orłem" on Krupówki. In July, he hiked the entire Orla Perć alone. He spent two days in August hiking from the Kościeliska Valley to Štrbské Pleso in Slovakia (about 80 km by car). The next day, he climbed Kriváň (2495 m a.s.l.). At the

end of August, he went on a 9-day hike with the highlander guide Klimek Bachleda.

Karłowicz described his impressions of mountain hikes in the "Taternik" magazine. He also cared about preserving the Tatras, which he expressed in the article "On an important matter: 'Respect the silence and majesty of the mountains'"²¹! As he climbed more peaks, he spent some time composing. In Zakopane, he created another symphonic poem – *Lithuanian*



8. 2. Karłowicz in Tatra Mountains

Source:

<https://wspinanie.pl/2009/07/zakopiańskim-szlakiem-mieczysława-karłowicza/>, dostęp 21.11.2025.

²⁰ L. Polony, *Poetyka muzyczna Mieczysława Karłowicza*, Kraków 1986, after: Ibid., p. 105.

²¹ *Mieczysław Karłowicz in the Tatras. Mountaineering writings and photographs*, Cracow 2016., after: Ibid., p. 111.

Rhapsody. The piece is unique because it is the only one that carries echoes of folk music. In the composer's notes from 1900, there are melodies that were later present in the new symphonic poem completed in November 1906. Karłowicz told Chybiński about the *Rhapsody*: "I tried to encapsulate in it all the sorrow, sadness, and eternal slavery of this people. (...) Whether and to what extent I managed to pour at least a part of what is suspended in the air in every corner of these places into the forms of the orchestral piece, I cannot judge"²².

Unfortunately, Karłowicz did not live to see the premiere of his Lithuanian Rhapsody. The poem was performed on February 26, 1909, less than three weeks after the composer's death. Grzegorz Fitelberg conducted the performance. However, let us not get ahead of ourselves. Karłowicz left Zakopane for Leipzig in October 1906 to attend a conducting course with the maestro of the baton, Artur Nikisch. A conflict with the Philharmonic authorities led Karłowicz to want to conduct his own compositions himself. In Leipzig, Karłowicz was visited by his mother Irena, with whom the composer stayed until June 1907. Then they both went to Berlin.

In the capital of Germany, on 21 March 1907, in the renowned Beethoven-Saal, the Berliner Philharmonisches Orchester under the baton of Grzegorz Fitelberg premiered *Eternal Songs*. The concert was held on behalf of the Publishing Company of Young Polish Composers. The audience included famous musicians: Richard Strauss, Leopold Godowski, and Emil Młynarski. Mieczysław Karłowicz was pleased with both the performance and the audience's reception of the piece. Unfortunately, conservative Warsaw newspapers criticized the event. For Karłowicz, this was another reason to sever ties with the capital. Karłowicz left Leipzig for Zakopane, holding nearly finished fourth symphonic poem in his hands.

²² *Mieczysław Karłowicz in letters and memories*, compiled by Henryk Anders, Cracow 1960., after: *Ibid.*, p. 112.



3 Stanisław Bergman „Stanisław Oświecim at the Anne's corpse”, 1888, National Museum in Cracow.

Source: <https://zbiory.mnk.pl/pl/wyniki-wyszukiwania/katalog/374616>, dostęp 21.11.2025.

...and death” (1907-1908)

What a work of art! ”*Stanisław and Anna Oświecimowie*”.

It's worth mentioning that these are historical figures – Stanisław Oświecim/Oświęcim was a courtier of King Władysław IV, who after the death of his half-sister Anna in Krosno, founded a memorial chapel in her honor. Stanisław's extraordinary act contributed to the legend of a great, forbidden love between siblings. It says that Stanisław travelled to the Pope to obtain a dispensation for his marriage to Anna. Upon his return, he found his sister dead. He soon died himself of grief and longing.

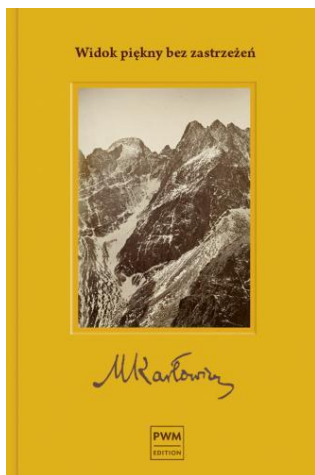
I have already mentioned the painting by Stanisław Bergman, Stanisław Oświecim at the body of Anna, which made a huge impression on the composer. Mieczysław saw it in 1893. Moved by Karłowicz... 14 years later, in 1907, he asked Bergman for a photograph of the painting by letter. Why? We are not sure. It can be assumed that the composer found echoes of his own unhappy love for his cousin Ludowika Śniadecka in the legend.

Karłowicz completed the work in November 1907 in Zakopane. The Warsaw Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by the composer, performed the work for the first time on April 27, 1908. Finally, voices of full recognition spoke up: "Karłowicz's work has the independence of thought, originality and freshness of themes, harmony of lines alongside the richness of ornamentation of an uncommon work," "The author keeps the listener and viewer of his creative visions in constant attention and makes him feel and think together with himself"²³.

”*Stanisław and Anna Oświecimowie*” received very favorable reviews after a concert in St. Petersburg in 1914, which was conducted by Grzegorz Fitelberg.

In the same year, 1907, Karłowicz permanently moved to the capital of the Tatra Mountains. He ultimately chose a house on the corner of ul. Sienkiewicza and Kościuszki, where the "Lutnia" villa is located today. The ground floor was occupied by the composer's mother, and the first floor by Mieczysław.

²³ A. Chybiński, *Mieczysław Karłowicz. Chronicle of the life of an artist and mountaineer*, Kraków 1949, after: *Ibid.*, p. 120.



10. „*The view is beautiful without a doubt. Tatra photography by Mieczysław Karłowicz, concept, introduction, and selection of photos by Justyna Nowicka, Kraków 2016.*”

Source:

<https://pwm.com.pl/i/galery/fu/II-type/pub/20504>, dostęp

21.11.2025.

“The view is beautiful without a doubt” (1907-1908)

The Tatra Mountains became Mieczysław Karłowicz's second home. The composer was a member of the Tourist Section of the Tatra Society. "No one equaled Karłowicz in the number of summits and peaks in the Tatras he had climbed"²⁴, noted Mieczysław Świerz, a renowned Polish mountaineer, in 1927. Mieczysław felt most at home in the mountains alone. During his hikes, he often marked trails and peaks with his initials and a swastika, which before World War II did not evoke hostile associations.

Biographer Anna Woźniakowska, citing accounts from Karłowicz's acquaintances about his mountain excursions, emphasizes the composer's prudence. This does not change the fact that in July 1908 Karłowicz climbed Kasprowy Wierch with his ...61-year-old mother.

In the Tatra Mountains, Mieczysław found his next passion: skiing.

In December 1907, he attended a skiing course, and in January 1908, he went on a difficult skiing and mountaineering expedition with Roman Kordys. "They reached the Karb on skis and then climbed the Kościelec peak in waders. It was the first winter ascent of the peak. The next day, they skied through the Pańszczyca Valley and, wearing crampons, climbed to Krzyżne, and then, for the first time in the history of winter tourism, they stood on the summit of Wołoszyn"²⁵

It's worth knowing that in Karłowicz's time, wooden skis were attached to highlander boots, and the bindings were made of reeds and leather. Modern-style canes were not used; instead, one powerful wooden stick was used for walking. Karłowicz also carried a camera with a tripod.

129 photographs and 88 negatives of the composer have been preserved to this day, and are kept by the Central Library of the Polish Tourist and Sightseeing Society in Krakow. The composer personally signed and selected the photographs for these albums. Most of the photographs show the High Tatras in winter, which was rare during the composer's time. In the album *The View is Beautiful without a Doubt* about Karłowicz's photographs, we read: "He is

²⁴ M. Pinkwart, *Zakopiańskim szlakiem Mieczysława Karłowicza*, Warsaw-Cracow 1985., after: Ibid., p. 124.

²⁵ Op. cit., after: Ibid., p. 126.

fascinated by the rugged massifs, 'scratched' by the veins of freshly fallen snow. The Tatra Siklawa waterfalls become a capricious drawing of white, vertical lines, almost suspended in space. (...) The Tatra lakes become mirrors, creating illusions, and the snow compacted into tongues softens and warms the cold of the slender rock formations"²⁶. Anna Woźniakowska emphasizes that Karłowicz's innovative and beautiful photographs continue to inspire professional mountain photographers to this day.

At the same time, the composer did not neglect composition. In August 1908, he completed a new symphonic poem, *Sad Story. Preludes to Eternity*. The work was premiered in November 1908 at the Warsaw Philharmonic during a subscription concert. Why? The musicians' opposition, organized by Karłowicz and Różycki, published in the press, had tangible effects. The director of the Philharmonic, Aleksander Rajchman, resigned, and the music director, Zygmunt Noskowski, also lost his job. The new director, Henryk Melcer, supported by a substantial injection of 50,000 rubles from Prince Lubomirski, entrusted Grzegorz Fitelberg with organizing an additional 12 concerts with, among others, contemporary works by Polish composers. On the evening of 13 November 1908, "*Sad Story*", which "presents the psychology of a suicide"²⁷, was premiered. The work delighted the audience and young critics. The day after, on November 14, 1908, Karłowicz left his last will in WMS. In his will, he bequeathed his estate to the Society, which he obligated to publish his further compositions. In December, he went to Vienna, where he conducted four poems: "*Returning Waves*", "*Eternal Song*"s, "*Sad Story*", and "*Stanisław and Anna Oświecimowie*". Reviewers praised Karłowicz's compositional skills, but found the concert monotonous.



11. The last composer's photo, 8.02.1909.

Source:

<http://karłowicz.free.fr/g/1909/07.htm>, dostęp 21.11.2025.

The Last Episode (1908-1909)

Upon arriving in Zakopane, Mieczysław sat down again at the score he had begun earlier. It was another symphonic poem – "*Episode at a Masquerade*", initially called "*A tragedy at a masquerade ball*". In the manuscript of the work, the composer wrote out a dialogue: "She (loudly): I don't know you... (in a low voice): Go away!... What's past is past... Do you hear?... Leave - forget!"²⁸ This is another - and last - theme of unhappy love in the composer's work.

²⁶ *The view is beautiful without a doubt. Tatra photography by Mieczysław Karłowicz*, concept, introduction, and selection of photos by Justyna Nowicka, Cracow 2016, after: Ibid., p. 127.

²⁷ T. Marek, *Mieczysław Karłowicz's Symphonic Poems*, Kraków 1959, after: Ibid., p. 131.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 134..

At the same time, Karłowicz was actively involved in the Tatra Society. In late December 1908, he organized a skiing course with Mariusz Zaruski and later co-lead it. Karłowicz's dedication and responsibility are most evident in his search for missing tourists with Klimek Bachleda in October 1908. Weather conditions were terrible – it was freezing and the snow was waist-deep. Then Karłowicz and Zaruski began thinking about how to create a mountain rescue service.

Let's go back to the music. It's 1909 now. Under the baton of Mieczysław Sołtys, the „*Returning Waves*” was performed on January 19 in Lviv. The audience and critics received the composition favorably. However, this concert was nothing compared to the triumph at the Warsaw Philharmonic. There, on January 22, 1909, the *Eternal Songs* were performed for the first time under the baton of Grzegorz Fitelberg. "The orchestra and the audience understood for the first time that they had an extraordinary musician in front of them. Therefore, especially after the second part of the trilogy, they forced him to make multiple bows, and we had never seen Karłowicz so wonderfully radiant and happy as on that day. It was the culmination of his life²⁹" wrote musician Józef Ozimiński to Adolf Chybiński.

As requested by Warsaw audiences, the *Eternal Songs* were performed again at the Philharmonic on 27 January 1909, this time under Karłowicz's baton. The audience was delighted once more. The composer returned to Zakopane. He wanted to buy the rented house, work on *Episode*, and ... test a new camera.

Due to the avalanche danger, Karłowicz postponed his trip to Czerwone Wierchy and went skiing to Czarny Staw. He began his journey on February 8 at 6 a.m. He stopped at the Hala Gąsienicowa lodge, where he signed the guest book, and continued on. The tracks show that he was cautious, but... he took the wrong path under the rocks of Mały Kościelec. He cut into the gully from which the avalanche started. Mieczysław Karłowicz died on February 8, 1909.

The composer's body was not found until 10 February 1909. At Karłowicz's, a camera remained intact. After five days, the solemn procession, in which the coffin was carried by Tatra

²⁹ *Mieczysław Karłowicz in letters and memories*, op. cit., after: *Ibid.*, p.135.

guides, arrived at the train station. On 16 February 1909, Mieczysław Karłowicz was buried in the family tomb at the Powązki Cemetery in Warsaw. In December 1908, he turned 32.



12 *Non omnis moriar* – the stone commemorating Mieczysław Karłowicz

Source:

<https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karłowicz#/media/Plik:P1060716.JPG>, the photo by Stefan Walkowski; 21.11.2025.

”Non omnis moriar...(1909-...)”

32 years... How could this happen? Even foreign travel periodicals reported the tragic death of the composer. However, the most painful loss was that of her beloved son, of course, for his mother Irena. Fate did not spare her suffering. In 1919, she also lost her son Edmund (he died of tuberculosis), and she died in a shelter in 1922, very ill and alone.

Thanks to the efforts of Mrs. Irena Karłowicz, the episode on the masquerade ball, which was three-quarters complete, was completed and published. The work was completed by Grzegorz Fitelberg in 1913, and it was first performed on 11 February 1914 during a concert organized by the WMS.

Writer Stefan Zeromski appealed for a collection to raise funds for a monument to commemorate Karłowicz. The reaction of the Poles was immediate. In the same year, 25 August 1909, a stone was unveiled at the site with the inscription "Mieczysław Karłowicz died here, swept away by a snow avalanche on 8 February 1909. *Non omnis moriar*". Every year, skiers and mountaineers set out on 8 February to pay their respects to the great Pole.

Karłowicz died young and tragically. He never married or had children. *Non omnis moriar* – not all of me will die. Why?

Biographer of the composer Anna Woźniakowska in the last subsection of *Non omnis moriar* points out many of Karłowicz's achievements. Let's summarize.

Some of the marked trails in the Tatra Mountains and the establishment of the Tatra Mountains Rescue Service (TMRS) are thanks to Karłowicz. He also created beautiful photos and descriptions of nature. Shaping one's own character and working on oneself, patriotism, and promoting Polish musical culture in society – these are the composer's important and admirable ideas.

And most important for Polish culture – his works. Renowned musicologist and composer Bogusław Schaeffer stated that Karłowicz was "the greatest composer talent in

Poland after Chopin"³⁰. Despite his young age, he created over 30 songs, a violin concerto, a symphony, and six symphonic poems. As Anna Woźniakowska puts it, new poems that were not inspired by history, but by states of the spirit.

To this day, every performance or recording of his works and every event related to Mieczysław Karłowicz seems to echo the Latin phrase: Non omnis moriar. As long as we remember Mieczysław Karłowicz, he will live on – a sensitive man, a versatile patriot, and a great Polish composer.

Here are some lesser-known facts about the life of Mieczysław Karłowicz. Of course, they will come in handy in the contest 😊:

1. **Karłowicz the athlete** - Mieczysław Karłowicz was very athletic. We know that he climbed mountains, skied and skated, and also taught skiing courses. Additionally, he was a cyclist - he had the latest model of a bicycle by John Kemp Starley from 1885 (!) with wheels of the same size, a lower frame, and a chain drive on the rear wheel. Among Karłowicz's novelties, we can also mention the American invention of James Plimpton from Medford (Massachusetts), which was... roller skates. Mieczysław tested them on Chmielna Street, which at the time was the only asphalted street in Warsaw.
2. **DIY** - In the second half of the 19th century, slöjd, a Scandinavian method of teaching handicrafts, arrived in Poland. The Karłowicz family had a small woodworking workshop in their apartment on Chmielna Street, which Mieczysław enjoyed using.

³⁰ M. Pinkwart, *Zakopiańskim szlakiem Mieczysława Karłowicza*, op. cit., after: Ibid., p. 142.

3. ***Kościelec 1909*** – In 1976, on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the National Philharmonic and the 100th anniversary of the birth of Mieczysław Karłowicz, Wojciech Kilar composed the symphonic poem *Kościelec 1909*. The title refers, of course, to the summit of Mały Kościelec, under which the composer died. Kilar's work features three themes: the theme of the mountain, the theme of the abyss, and the theme of fate.

https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ko%C5%9Bcielec_1909, accessed on 29 November 2025.

4. **Mieczysław Karłowicz Philharmonic in Szczecin** - On 5 December 1958, the State Philharmonic in Szczecin was named after Mieczysław Karłowicz after 10 years. On 5.09.2014, the first season was inaugurated in the new, contemporary white building. The building won the Mies van der Rohe Award 2015 - the so-called architectural Oscar. In September 2023, the Szczecin Philharmonic Orchestra received the Gloria Artis "Meritorious for Culture" Gold Medal, the highest honor for institutions for their cultural activities.

<https://historia.filharmonia.szczecin.pl/pl/kalendarium>, accessed on 29 November 2025.

Mieczysław Karłowicz Philharmonic: <https://filharmonia.szczecin.pl/pl>, accessed on 29 November 2025.

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