

Henryk Wieniawski (1835-1880) – life and work

Early years and education



Henryk Wieniawski z bratem Józefem,
Litografia 1851. Zbiory Rosyjskiej Biblioteki
Narodowej

Henryk Wieniawski was born on 10 July 1835 in Lublin, into a family with rich intellectual and musical traditions. His father, **Tadeusz Wieniawski**, was a respected doctor who attached great importance to the education of his children. His mother, **Regina Wieniawski née Wolff**, was a pianist. She had a huge influence on Henryk's early interest in music. His mother's brother, **Edward Wolff**, was a pianist and composer, with whom Wieniawski performed when he became a well-known and esteemed violinist. Henryk Wieniawski had several brothers: an older **Julian (1834-1912)** and younger twins: **Józef (1837-1912)** and **Alexander (1837-**

1916), as well as **Adam, Kajetan** and **Konrad**, who died in early childhood. Julian, an amateur pianist, became a writer and chose the nickname "Jordan." Joseph was an outstanding pianist and composer. Alexander initially developed a vocal career, but eventually chose the profession of civil servant. Tadeusz Wieniawski also had an eldest son, **Tadeusz (1816-1887)**, from his first marriage, who became a doctor, following in his father's footsteps. The Wieniawski family was strongly connected with culture and art, which created a favorable environment for the development of young Henryk's talent.

From an early age, Henryk Wieniawski revealed an extraordinary musical ability, which his family spotted and decided to develop. **His first music lessons came from his mother.** Wieniawski quickly showed that he was a child of exceptional musicianship and talent. **At the age of seven, Henryk was introduced to the world of violin playing** by the excellent Polish artist **Jan Hornziel**, later concertmaster of the Grand Theatre in Warsaw. Then he studied under **Stanisław Serwaczyński**, who served as soloist and concertmaster of the Budapest Opera. Henryk Wieniawski made rapid progress and at the age of seven made his public debut as a soloist, which aroused great interest and admiration among the audience.

At the age of just eight, Henryk Wieniawski went to France to take an exam for the prestigious **Conservatoire de Paris**, one of the most important musical institutions in the world. According to the procedure, only French students who completed the twelfth year were admitted to the Paris Conservatoire. Thanks to efforts and by an exceptional decree,

on **28 November 1843**, Henryk Wieniawski with the number 468 was enrolled among the students of the Conservatory. The admission of such a young student was a great distinction, testifying to his extraordinary talent. In his first year of study, Henryk Wieniawski studied in the class of **Joseph Clavel**. He then joined a violin class led by the virtuoso **Joseph Lambert Massart** (in the picture), one of the leading educators of the time, known for his rigorous teaching methods and sophisticated approach to violin technique.



Wieniawski studied under Massart for three years, developing his technical and interpretive skills. His talent for the violin quickly gained recognition, and he won further accolades and awards. In addition to learning to play the violin, Henryk studied music theory and composition, which allowed him to develop his artistic potential in a wider context.

In 1846, at just 11 years old, Wieniawski graduated from the Conservatory with the highest honors, earning his first diploma. His achievements at such a young age made him one of the youngest and most talented graduates in the history of the Paris Conservatory. He won a gold medal in the violin class, which was an affirmation of his exceptional abilities.

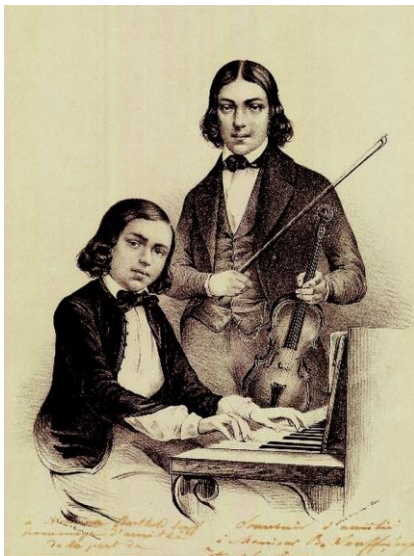
After completing his violin studies, Wieniawski studied in Paris for two more years with Professor Joseph Massart. Wieniawski's mother, Regina Wolff, came to France with Henryk's younger brother Józef, who began studying piano at the Paris Conservatory. Ms. Regina invited her brother - the pianist and composer Edward Wolff - as well as personalities from the world of science and the arts to the house. **Adam Mickiewicz** was a frequent guest at the Wieniawski house. A teenage Henryk also met **Fryderyk Chopin**. The rich cultural life also had an impact on the young artist's development.

In his childhood, Wieniawski often gave concerts in Paris, and also performed his own compositions. The first piece – *Grand Caprice Fantastique* Op. 1 - he created between 1846-47. Soon after, among others, *Allegro de sonate* Op. 2 (1848) or unfortunately – as most of the children's compositions, lost - *Violin Concerto in D major*, a fragment of which Wieniawski wrote in Stanisław Moniuszko's diary. Fortunately, the first two pieces - *Grand Caprice Fantastique op 1*, dedicated to Joseph Massart, and *Allegro de Sonate Op. 2*, dedicated to Moniuszko, survived to our time. Wieniawski's first compositions, for violin and piano, testify both to his brilliant violin technique and to the extraordinary yet unpolished training of the composer's talent.

After completing his first tour – which you will find out later – in 1849, Wieniawski decided to continue his education in composition. He studied at the Paris Conservatory under **Hippolite Collet**, an outstanding music theorist and composer. The year-long studies allowed him to deepen his theoretical knowledge and to develop his compositional skills, which later had a significant influence on his own works.

From an early age, Wieniawski was not only an outstanding performer, but also a developing composer. The influences he received at the Paris Conservatory shaped his later work and style, combining virtuosity with deep musicality. It was these qualities that would become characteristic of his artistic career in adulthood.

The concert life of Józef and Henryk Wieniawski



Józef and Henryk Wieniawski were brothers who played a significant role in the European music of the 19th century. Józef Wieniawski, Henryk's younger brother, was an outstanding pianist, composer and conductor. **He was born on 23 May 1837** in Lublin and, like his brother, showed early musical talents. He studied in Paris, where he learned to play the piano under famous teachers such as **Antoine François Marmontel** and **Pierre Zimmermann**. He later honed his skills in Vienna under the tutelage of **Carl Czerny** and **Fryderyk Chopin**. Like Henryk, he also completed a year of composition studies at the Paris Conservatoire.

Józef Wieniawski quickly gained a reputation as an outstanding pianist and composer. His repertoire included both his own compositions and works by other composers, including Beethoven, Chopin and Liszt. Wieniawski was also an active conductor, collaborating with numerous orchestras. He performed throughout Europe, including countries such as Russia, Germany, England, France and Poland, gaining recognition for his masterful performances and deep interpretation of music.

On 30 January 1848, Henryk and Józef Wieniawski, together with their uncle Edward Wolff, gave a farewell concert at the Sax Hall in Paris, and then set out on a year-long tour of Europe. Of course, they travelled with their mother. Henryk was 13 at the time, and Józef only 11. Henryk was a subject and scholarship holder of the Tsar of Russia, so he went

to St. Petersburg. Listening to the teenage Wieniawski, the mature Belgian violinist Henri Vieuxtemps said: "This child is without doubt a genius, otherwise it would be impossible to play at his age with such passionate affection, and what is more, with such intelligence and such a deeply conceived plan."¹

Henryk Wieniawski performed in St. Petersburg for three months. He often visited the salons of the Russian aristocracy. It happened that he played together with the hosts – the cellist, count **Mateusz Wielhorski** and the violinist, prince **Mikołaj Jusupow**. The Wieniawski family then visited the Baltic countries, giving concerts in Helsinki and Riga, among others. On his way to Warsaw, Henryk Wieniawski met Stanisław Moniuszko in Vilnius in the autumn of 1848. Finally the capital heard the Polish Paganini – on 10 and 15 October 1848 Henryk Wieniawski performed in the Teatr Wielki. "In his astonishing play, his spring freshness, strength, and skill, and the deep feeling of a mature man alternately fight for priority,"² wrote a reviewer of *Kurier Warszawski*.

Through Lublin and Puławy, the Wieniawski brothers made their way to Dresden. There they spent almost four months with a prominent Polish violinist, **Karol Lipiński (1790-1861)**. The much older Lipiński was also a composer who willingly honed the musical abilities of the teenage Wieniawski. Moreover, Lipiński's letter of recommendation allowed Henryk to meet the piano virtuoso Franz Liszt and gave two concerts in Weimar.

After returning to Paris in the spring of 1849 and a year of composition studies, the brothers set out again on tour in September 1850 – this time for two years. In December 1851 they visited Warsaw. In the years 1851-1852 the teenagers performed almost 200 (!) times in Russia and the Baltic countries. That's not all. At that time Henryk composed very intensively. "He wrote *Adagio élégiaque* Op. 5, the concert fantasy *Souvenir de Moscou* Op. 6,

Capriccio-Valse Op. 7, *Grand duo polonaise* (a joint composition of the brothers), *Romance sans parole* and *Rondo élégant* Op. 9, *Russian Carnival* Op. 11³".

After a short rest, on 20 February 1853, Wieniawscy brothers went to Vienna, where they performed before the imperial family in the Vienna opera house. In the Austrian capital, Henryk presented his famous *Kujawiak in A minor* for the first time. He also performed the

¹ Wiktor Każyński, „Tygodnik Petersburski”, 5 I 1848, after: https://www.wieniawski.pl/zyciorys_Henryka_wieniawskiego_czesc_1.html, 13.01.2025.

² „Kurier Warszawski”, 11 X 1848, after: Ibid.

³ Ibid.

***Variations on the Austrian hymn Op. 10*, later included in the collection of *Caprices Op. 10*.**

The Wieniawski brothers appeared in the German city of Poznań in the spring of 1854. The warmly received Polish virtuoso did not only give concerts. Henryk dedicated his piece, probably written earlier, *Souvenir de Posen* Op. 3, to Joanna Niemojowska, and the aforementioned *Kujawiak in A minor* – to Michalina Czapska. Also in Poznań, the city of later International Violin Competitions, Wieniawski created his only song, *I understand*, to the lyrics of Józef Dionizy Minasowicz.

In the years 1853-54 the Wieniawski brothers gave concerts mainly in Germany. They visited Munich, Berlin, Frankfurt am Main, everywhere gaining great admiration. In Leipzig, on 27 October 1853 in the Gewandhaus Hall, Wieniawski performed his newly completed *Violin Concerto in F sharp minor Op. 14* from the manuscript, which was met with enthusiasm by listeners and critics.

The popularity of the Wieniawski duo is best demonstrated by the December concert of 1855. The professor of the Brussels Conservatory **François Joseph Fetis** invited the brothers to perform in the Conservatory Hall, which could accommodate almost 2,000 people. Well, there were so many listeners that the hall was not enough...

Henryk, with his extraordinary violin technique, and Józef, with his finesse of piano playing, created the perfect duet that delighted audiences all over the world. Wieniawscy brothers gained international recognition not only as outstanding soloists, but also as a duo that was able to combine their talents in a unique way. Their joint concerts were artistic events that attracted crowds and contributed to the development of their careers. Touring together also influenced their compositions – some of Henryk's pieces were written specifically for joint performances with Józef.

Despite their undeniable success, the Wieniawski brothers decided in the summer of 1885 that they would perform separately. Henryk and Józef were too big personalities, and - unfortunately - the younger Józef remained in Henryk's shadow during the concerts. In the second half of 1855, our violinist performed and rested in Szczawno-Zdrój. He then visited Wrocław, Leipzig and Cologne to stand in Belgium at the beginning of 1856.

Individual artistic career



Henryk Wieniawski's extremely intense individual artistic career took place in the years 1855-1880. It is impossible to list all the cities visited, the works performed and the personalities met. Let's try to trace the most important concert achievements of Henryk Wieniawski.

In 1856 the artist visited Belgium and Holland. He performed in Brussels, Antwerp, Ghent and the Dutch cities of Amsterdam, The Hague and Utrecht. Importantly, in 1856 the first biography of a 21-year-old (!) was published in the Netherlands. Henryk Wieniawski. It was written by musicologist Alexandre Desfossez, quoting in the book an excerpt from a Brussels review: “No violinist can compare with Wieniawski, the first in terms of mastering the technique of playing. Not since Paganini has there been a virtuoso of this rank⁴”.

In October 1858, Wieniawski came to London for the first time. He arrived at the invitation of **Louis Antoine Jullien**, the famous impresario, conductor and composer. Wieniawski took part in his 20th series of concerts at the Royal Lyceum Theatre, performing 40 times in seven weeks, six days a week. Delighted Londoners besieged ticket offices. Then Wieniawski toured with Jullien's band in other cities in England, Ireland and Scotland.

The following year, 1859, Henryk Wieniawski participated in three cycles of London chamber concerts. These were: the Monday Popular Concerts, the Mornings of the Musical Union, and performances organized by the Beethoven Quartet Society, in which the artist played the viola (!) in a string quartet with the violinists Heinrich Wilhelm Ernst and Joseph Joachim and the cellist Alfredo Piatti. Joseph Joachim wrote: “[Wieniawski] was always, and still is today, the most insane and risky virtuoso I have ever heard. Anyone who has not witnessed the most daring acrobatic leaps he performed on the viola when Ernst and Piatti were forming a string quartet in London's Beethoven Society, cannot imagine what his hand could do”⁵.

⁴ „L'Indépedance”, 29 II 1856, after: Ibid.

⁵ Arnold Moser, *Geschichte des Violinspiels*. Berlin 1923, after: Ibid.

The London tour also had a great impact on Henryk Wieniawski's personal life. **In April 1859**, the artist, through contacts of the pianist Anton Rubinstein, met his future wife, Isabela Hampton (1837-1928). Isabella's mother, Aleksandra Osborne, favored the marriage; after all, her brother, George Osborne, was a pianist and composer. Mr. Hampton, however, wanted financial stability for his daughter, so he agreed to the marriage on two conditions: Mr. Wieniawski was to insure the Hamptons for 200,000 francs and get a permanent job.

Wieniawski went to St. Petersburg to gain the honorary position of the Tsar of Russia's court violinist. It worked – in April 1860, Wieniawski was given a three-year contract, which he then extended three times. Wieniawski remained the Tsar of Russia's court violinist from 1860 to 1872.

After spectacular concerts in Warsaw in the summer of 1860, Wieniawski went to Paris. There, on August 8, 1860, in the church of St. Andrew married Isabella Hampton. It was a truly musical wedding. Isabella was led down the altar by the famous pianist and Wieniawski's friend Anton Rubinstein, the composer Gioacchino Rossini was a witness, and the aforementioned Henri Vieuxtemps played the violin. The newlyweds visited their parents in London and Lublin, and then via Warsaw they set off to St. Petersburg.

Wieniawski's duties included performing at court concerts, performing solo parts in St. Petersburg operas and ballets, and teaching violin at a theater school. Once a year, the artist could perform at his own expense in the theaters of Moscow and St. Petersburg, whose rights Wieniawski notoriously abused by giving concerts at his own discretion. Wieniawski began working with the Music Society founded by Anton Rubinstein, in which he established a string quartet. Autumn and winter chamber concerts with Wieniawski were highly appreciated and interested among the St. Petersburg elite.

Let's go back for a moment to Wieniawski's wife. Isabella was a talented pianist and companion of Wieniawski, with whom he often performed on stage. Their concerts together were extremely popular and further strengthened his position in the world of music.

We will only mention that in St. Petersburg Wieniawski composed the *Etudes -Caprices for two violins Op. 18* for his pedagogical needs. In Petersburg were created also the famous folk miniatures *Obertas* and *Dudziarz*, published under the joint title *Deux mazourkas caractéristiques (Two characteristic mazurkas)* Op. 19. In 1865 Wieniawski composed the *Fantasia for themes from the opera "Faust" by Ch. Gounod*; in 1870 – *2nd Polonaise in A major* Op. 21. In St. Petersburg he created a transcription of Anton Rubinstein's *Romance*

entitled *Night*, as well as the only piece in his work for viola *Reverie (Dream)*, dedicated to his quartet partner **Hieronim Weickmann**, and completed by him after the author's death in 1885. In Petersburg Wieniawski created also the first version of *Violin Concerto No. 2 in D minor Op. 22 (1862)*. The piece, after modifications, was finally published in 1870.

In 1862 Anton Rubinstein opened the first Russian Conservatory of Music in St. Petersburg. In the years 1862-1867 the violin and chamber ensemble class was led by none other than Henryk Wieniawski.

Wieniawski loved to perform and actually spent about six of his twelve contracted years in St. Petersburg. In 1861, 1864 and 1866-69 he performed in London, both in concerts at Covent Garden Promenade and in private homes. In 1863 and 1867 he performed in Amsterdam. In 1862 he gave a charitable concert in the Paris Hotel Lambert, the proceeds of which were donated to impoverished Poles in France. In 1863, 1867, 1870 and 1871 he visited almost all of Scandinavia - Denmark, Sweden, Finland and Norway. Every year he performed in German spas – among others in Baden-Baden, Wiesbaden or Kreutznach. In 1866 and 1869 he gave concerts in Bucharest. In 1869 in Constantinople he performed before one listener – Sultan Abdul-Aziz.

After a ten-year break, in 1870 Henryk Wieniawski gave a concert in Warsaw. Critics pointed out less temperament and more poetic in the artist's playing. In 1872, Wieniawski was supposed to perform in the capital, but Warsaw's governor, Fyodor Berg, apparently forgot about the concert. After an argument, Wieniawski, who preferred to lead a free concert life, resigned his St. Petersburg job. In June 1872, he performed for the last time in Russia. In August 1872, at the request of the impresario Maurycy Grau, the pianist Anton Rubinstein, the violinist Henryk Wieniawski and two singers, Luisa Liebhart and Luisa Ormeni, embarked on a concert tour to the United States.

Wieniawski was the last to join the artists. Rubinstein's name was written in large font on the posters. It was no small surprise to American listeners when they discovered Wieniawski's potential. An American critic reported: "In Henryk Wieniawski we listened to one of the world's best violinists. To hear Mendelssohn's excellent E minor Concerto played by such a master was an unadulterated delight"⁶. Reviewers quickly appreciated the beauty of the play and Wieniawski's extraordinary technique. Rubinstein and Wieniawski became true

⁶ „Dwight's Journal of Music”, 19 X 1872, after: Ibid.

ambassadors of Romantic music, popularizing it in the United States. Their concerts attracted large crowds, and Wieniawski was often praised for his ability to interpret songs insightfully and for his unusual virtuosity.

The delight of audiences and critics didn't change the fact that the American tour was incredibly exhausting. The artists traveled around the United States for eight months, giving concerts almost daily. They performed 215 times in 60 cities on the East Coast. An exhausted Anton Rubinstein returned to Europe, and Henryk Wieniawski remained in the New World for another year, visiting the West Coast - including California - as well as Mexico. The artist was especially esteemed in California. Here, a second biography of Wieniawski was written - we only know about it from newspapers, for it unfortunately did not survive to our time. Wieniawski returned with the composition *Souvenir de San Francisco*. As if our artist wasn't enough - San Francisco is more than 9000 km from Warsaw – returning to Europe, Wieniawski also performed in New York and ... in Cuba.

From 1 December 1874 the virtuoso lived in Brussels. In the Belgian capital, together with the pianist Louis Brassini, he created a new series of chamber concerts "Union Instrumentale." At the same time he frequently visited Paris, The Hague, Amsterdam, and in 1875-76 he played in German cities, including Hamburg, Magdeburg and Frankfurt am Main. In early 1876 he performed three times in Warsaw, and in the same year he gave concerts in the British Isles.

Wieniawski was part of a wide circle of artists, many of whom influenced him, but Wieniawski himself also influenced their work and activities. In Weimar, a teenage Wieniawski performed in front of Ferenc Liszt, one of the most important pianists and composers of the Romantic era. Liszt also taught Józef Wieniawski, Henryk's brother.

Wieniawski also remained in contact with **Pyotr Tchaikovsky**, one of the greatest Russian composers. Wieniawski's students taught in St. Petersburg introduced Tchaikovsky's music to their violin repertoire.

Following Henryk Wieniawski's artistic travels, it is easier to name the cities where he has not been. Without a plane he visited America, he constantly played in many European countries. In addition, he conducted pedagogical activities and composed.

Teaching career



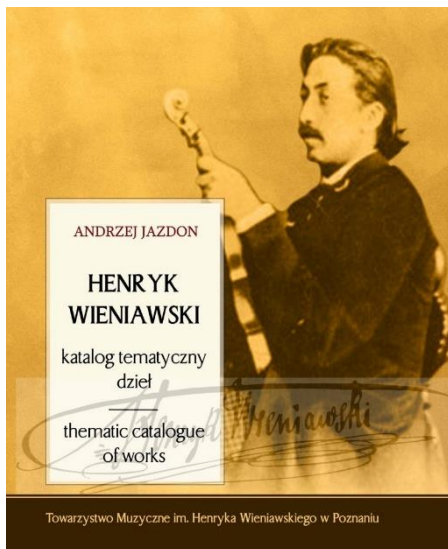
In 1853-54, the teenage Henryk Wieniawski published **his first collection of etudes - *L'École Moderne: 10 Études-Caprices op. 10***. This collection became one of the basic pedagogical works for violinists and is still considered an important element of music education today. These etudes are not only technically demanding, but also full of musical expression, which makes them unique in their kind.

Throughout his life, Wieniawski tried to combine artistic and pedagogical activities. In 1862, he accepted an offer to become **professor of violin at the St. Petersburg Conservatory**, one of the most important musical institutions in Europe at the time. From 1862-67 Wieniawski led a class of violinists and chamber ensembles there, and his students, such as **Leopold Auer**, later became well-known violinists and pedagogues, continuing the Wieniawski tradition.

While in the United States, the director of the Brussels Conservatory, **François Auguste Gevaert**, offered Wieniawski the job of professor of violin class to replace the paralyzed Henri Vieuxtemps. The Belgian violinist's health improved, but Vieuxtemps refused to continue working. Only then did Wieniawski become professor of violin class, as well as chamber ensembles. He began the job on 28/12/1874 and continued until 27/09/1877.

As a pedagogue, Wieniawski had a significant influence on his students, many of whom later became famous violinists. His teaching methods, focusing on shaping both technique and interpretive clarity, were innovative and had a major influence on the development of violin art. Wieniawski made sure that his students often performed in concert to develop their own style, encouraging them to take a creative approach to music, which made him not only a master of technique but also a teacher who shaped artistic personalities. Among Wieniawski's best students was **Leopold Lichtenberg**, whom the artist met in America and encouraged to study in Europe. Lichtenberg graduated from the Brussels Conservatory with a first prize. Among Wieniawski's private students was the Belgian violinist and composer, **Eugène Ysaÿe**.

Career as a composer



His compositional work developed in parallel with his performing career. Wieniawski composed both solo and orchestral works. He composed **four violin concertos**. Two of them – in D major and in A minor – have been lost. The remained two are still the canon of the violin repertoire today. *Violin Concerto No. 1 in F-sharp minor Op. 14* (1853) and *Violin Concerto No. 2 in D minor, Op. 22* (1862) are works that show not only the composer's virtuosity, but also his ability to create deeply emotional and lyrical melodies. The 2nd Concerto

in B minor, in particular, has gained enormous popularity and is often performed by violinists around the world. Wieniawski used a wealth of violin techniques in his compositions, such as various types of bowing, complex passages and difficult double sounds, making his pieces challenging even for experienced musicians.

However, Wieniawski was not limited to composing and performing. He was also involved in the musical life of Europe, organising concerts, festivals and competitions. He belonged to many prestigious music associations, and his activities had a huge influence on the development of violin music in the 19th century.

Among the most important works of Wieniawski are:

Violin Concerto No. 2 in D minor Op. 22

One of the most famous and esteemed violin concertos in the world, composed in 1862. This piece consists of three parts: *Allegro moderato*, *Romance: Andante non troppo* and *Finale: Allegro moderato (à la Zingara)*. The addressee of the dedication was the Spanish violin virtuoso Pablo Sarasate. It is a violin masterpiece that requires from the performer not only technical prowess, but also the capacity for deep emotional interpretation.

Violin Concerto No. 1 in F-sharp minor Op. 14

Dedicated to King Fryderyk Wilhelm IV of Prussia. Composed in 1853, this concerto is extremely technically demanding. It consists of three parts: *Allegro moderato*, *Preghiera: Larghetto* and *Rondo à la Polonaise* (to the rhythm of Polonaise). It is a piece full of virtuoso passages that challenge even the most experienced violinist.

Legend Op. 17

Composed in 1859, *Legend* is one of Wieniawski's most lyrical and emotional works. Initially written as part of the *Violin Concerto No. 2*, it later became a stand-alone piece that gained huge popularity. It is a piece often performed by violinists around the world, appreciated for its melody and deep emotional expression.

Polonaise de concert in D major Op. 4

One of Wieniawski's earliest compositions, written in 1848, when the composer was only 13 years old. *Polonaise in D major* is a virtuoso piece that gained popularity due to its vivacity and characteristic rhythms of polonaise.

Polonaise in A major Op. 21

Another of Wieniawski's polonaises, composed in 1869. It is a piece full of energy and national pride that requires excellent technique and rhythmic precision from the performer. Both polonaises Wieniawski created in two arrangements – for violin and piano and for violin and orchestra. The addressee of the dedication is François Van Hal.

Scherzo-Tarantella Op. 16

Composed in 1855, *Scherzo-Tarantella* is a piece with a fast tempo and a lively character (tarantella is a fast Italian dance). It is full of virtuoso passages and dynamic contrasts, making it one of the violinists' favorite concert pieces. Wieniawski dedicated the piece to his violin professor, Joseph Lambert Massart.

Etudes-Caprices Op. 18

A collection of 8 etudes written in 1862 that combine technical and musical elements. These etudes are often used in teaching the violin because of their pedagogical value and technical requirements. The addressee of the dedication was the Belgian violinist and friend of Wieniawski, Henri Vieuxtemps.

Two characteristic mazurkas Op. 19

Two characteristic mazurkas – *Dudziarz* and *Obertas* – reflect Wieniawski's fascination with Polish folk music. These mazurkas are full of lyricism and dancing lightness, while also posing a technical challenge for the performer. Mazurkas were dedicated to Evelyne Reisky and Wanda Młodnicka.

Fantasia on themes from the opera "Faust" Op. 20

Composed in 1865, the fantasy based on the motifs of Charles Gounod's opera "Faust" is a work that combines virtuosity with dramatic and lyrical elements. The composition was dedicated to the King of Denmark, Christian IX. This piece shows Wieniawski's ability to create musical images full of expression and technical complexity.

Souvenir de Moscow Op. 6

Composed in 1852, this work is a fantasy on Russian themes, full of virtuosic passages and characteristic melodies. The work is dedicated to Wincent Bobrowski. It is a piece that reflects the influence of Russian music on Wieniawski's work.

The essential list of the composition of Henryk Wieniawski:

<https://www.wieniawski.pl/19-spis-kompozycji.html>



Later years and death

In the autumn of 1876 in London, Henryk Wieniawski's health deteriorated significantly. There were even rumours of the virtuoso's death. Wieniawski asked for a year's leave to save his health in order to perform again. Despite serious health problems, in the years 1876-77 the artist visits Vienna, Prague, Cracow, Budapest, goes to Russia and Scandinavia. He performs in Switzerland (Geneva, Lausanne), Germany (Baden-Baden, Leipzig, Frankfurt am Main). He embarks on a tour of Scandinavia and Germany. Oslo, Copenhagen, Stockholm, Hanover, Berlin, Stuttgart, Munich, Wrocław - other cities flicker in the brilliant career of Henryk Wieniawski, which is fading faster and faster.

Wieniawski suffered from chronic heart and lung disease, which became more and more annoying over time. Nevertheless, he persisted in his artistic activity, which was testament to his deep commitment to music and extraordinary passion for his profession.

In January 1878, the artist performed in Schwerin, Germany, with the famous pianist and composer **Camille Saint-Saëns**. He then visited the Netherlands, England and France, before coming to Berlin in November. On 11 November 1878, Wieniawski collapsed while performing his *Violin Concerto No. 2 in D minor*. Still, in December he appeared in Moscow, playing his latest, sadly lost, *Violin Concerto in A minor*.

In January 1879, he performed in Helsinki. The critic recalled: "That evening, when a sick Wieniawski played for a large audience with breathless listening to his music, is worth remembering. In this silence there was a service, which is not often the case. Perhaps the audience was moved by the contrast between the suffering artist and his divine music, something that reminded of life and eternity⁷".

The last concert rehearsal in Wieniawski's life took place in October 1879 in Crimea. Unfortunately, the ailing artist was duped by an impresario and ended up in a hospital for the poor in Moscow. Sadly, it must be admitted that a large part of the huge fees Henryk Wieniawski lost by playing roulette.

⁷ „Helsingfors Dagblad”, 21 I 1879., after: Ibid.

After this incident, Wieniawski was cared for by his friend, Nikolai Rubinstein, a famous pianist and conductor, who invited him to his home in Moscow. There, despite the best efforts of doctors, Wieniawski's condition did not improve. He died on March 31, 1880, aged just 44.

After this incident, Wieniawski was cared for by his friend, Nikolai Rubinstein, a famous pianist and conductor, who invited him to his home in Moscow. Wieniawski spent the last weeks of his life in the palace of the famous art patron Nadieżda von Meck. There, despite the best efforts of doctors, Wieniawski's condition did not improve. **He died on 31 March 1880, aged just 44.**

The death of Wieniawski was a great blow to the world of music. His passing caused mourning among musicians and music lovers around the world. Wieniawski's funeral took place on 7 April 1880 in the Church of St. Cross in Warsaw. The funeral procession gathered 40,000 crowds of mourners, including many outstanding artists, who came to pay tribute to the great violinist and composer. Henryk Wieniawski rested in the Powązkowski Cemetery. His headstone is decorated by a monument carved by **Andrzej Pruszyński** with the inscription: Henryk Wieniawski, prematurely for the art of the violin extinct artist.

Although Henryk Wieniawski died at a relatively young age, his contribution to the development of violin music is undeniable. His creativity and technique for playing the violin, despite the passing of years, remain extremely inspiring for successive generations of musicians. The memory of him lives on not only through his compositions, but also through numerous initiatives commemorating his character, such as the International Violin Competition named after him. Henryk Wieniawski. His life and work are testimony to the extraordinary talent and determination that allowed him to make a permanent mark in the history of music.

International Henryk Wieniawski Violin Competition



The International Henryk Wieniawski Violin Competition. is one of the most important and prestigious music events in the world, dedicated to young violinists. The event is a founding member of the Geneva-based **World Federation of International Music Competitions (WFIMC)**, established in 1957. The competition is held every five years in Poznań, gathering talented musicians from all over the world who compete for laurels in one of the oldest and most renowned violin competitions.

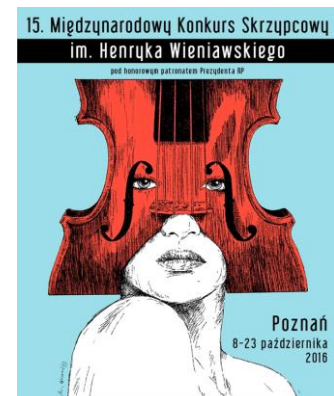
The competition was initiated in 1935 by the Artist's nephew, composer Adam Wieniawski, to celebrate the 100th anniversary of Henryk Wieniawski's birth. The first edition was held in Warsaw and already then attracted the attention of the international music community. Subsequent editions, except for breaks caused by the Second World War, were held regularly in Poland, and since 1952 the event has been hosted by Poznań, a city with rich musical traditions, where Henryk Wieniawski has performed 16 times.

The Wieniawski Violin Competition is recognized as one of the most demanding violin competitions in the world. Its participants must not only demonstrate excellent playing technique, but also a deep understanding of music and the ability to express emotions and interpret musical works. The competition's repertoire includes pieces from different eras and styles, with particular emphasis placed on performances of Wieniawski's works.

Over the years, the competition became a springboard to international careers for many outstanding violinists. The winners of the competition were such artists as **Ginette Neveu, Ida Haendel, Wanda Wilkomirska** and **Bartosz Bryła**. Many of them later gained global recognition and built outstanding solo careers.

The competition has so far been won by four Polish violinists:

- Piotr Janowski (5th edition, 1967)
- Bartłomiej Nizioł (10th edition, 1991)
- Piotr Pławner (10th edition, 1991)
- Agata Szymczewska (12th edition, 2001).



The competition is organized by the Henryk Wieniawski Musical Society of Poznań, which oversees its course and takes care of the high artistic level of the event. The jury of the competition consists of outstanding musicians, violinists and educators, who evaluate the participants' performances in terms of technique, interpretation, musicality and general artistic expression.

Prizes in the Wieniawski's competition include not only prestigious titles, medals and financial awards, but also the opportunity to perform with renowned orchestras and perform in prestigious concert halls around the world. The winners of the competition often gain international recognition and invitations to collaborate with leading conductors and orchestras.

The Wieniawski Competition also has a huge impact on the development of the violin art, promoting young talents and making an important contribution to the maintenance and development of musical traditions. Thanks to the competition, Henryk Wieniawski's name and musical heritage are still alive and inspire the next generation of violinists around the world.

Modern editions of the competition are widely broadcast in the media, which allows it to reach a wider audience. The competition is also accompanied by numerous accompanying events, such as concerts, workshops, and lectures, which attract both participants and music lovers.

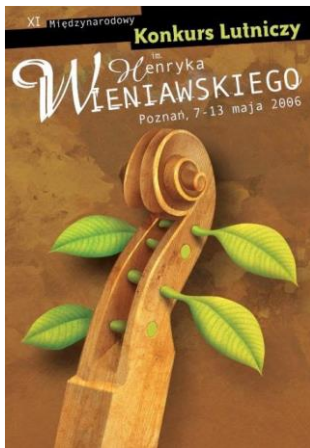
The International Henryk Wieniawski Violin Competition, as one of the most important events in the world of classical music, continues to play a key role in shaping the careers of young artists and promoting high performance standards in violin music.

The last, 16th competition won the Koryfeusz Polish Music Award in the 2022 event category. The next competition will take place in the autumn of 2026.

[More about the contest is worth reading on:](https://www.wieniawski.pl/mks.html)

<https://www.wieniawski.pl/mks.html>

<https://konkurs.wieniawski.pl/>



International Henryk Wieniawski Violin Making Competition

International Henryk Wieniawski Violin Making Competition is a prestigious event held every 5 years in Poznań dedicated to the art of violin making. The competition, which is sponsored by the outstanding Polish violinist and composer Henryk Wieniawski, has been taking place since 1957 and is one of the oldest and most important events of its kind in the world.

The aim of the competition is to promote high-quality stringed instruments, in particular violin and viola, and to support the work of luthiers from all over the world. The jury consists of outstanding luthier specialists and musicians, and instruments are judged on both the artistic and tonal qualities.

The event attracts luthiers, musicians and music lovers from all over the world, creating a unique opportunity to meet artists and performers, and to present the latest achievements in the field of lutherie.

The next Violin Making Competition will be held in the spring, 9-16/05/2025.



Here are a few, lesser-known, curiosities from the life of Henryk Wieniawski. Of course, they'll come in handy in the competition 😊

1. **Excellent violins** - Henryk Wieniawski had several excellent instruments. The Stradivarius violins "Wieniawski" (1719) from the workshop of the legendary lute player Antonio Stradivarius have survived to our time. These violins, built in the so-called "golden period" of Stradivarius, were some of the lute's most perfect instruments. Their extraordinary sound, combined with Wieniawski's technique, made his concerts an unforgettable experience. The winner of the Poznań competition, Bartłomiej Nizioł, performed on the "Wieniawski". The instrument belongs to the president of Daimler AG for the Swiss market, and it sounds in the hands of concertmaster Tonhalle Orchester Zurich.

<https://dzieje.pl/kultura-i-sztuka/skrzypce-stradivariego-w-historii-polski>, 18/01/2025.

In the last years of his life, the virtuoso gave concerts on Giuseppe Guarneri del Gesù's "Wieniawski" (1742) violin. The instrument has happily survived to our times and is now played by Taiwanese artist Paul Huang.

<https://stradivarisociety.com/instrument-collection/giuseppe-guarneri-del-gesu-cremona-1742-wieniawski/>, 18/01/2025.

In 2016, the National Museum in Poznan bought **the GAND violin, Luthier de la Musique du Roi at du Conservatoire de Musique, 1846**, on which Wieniawski played until 1850. You can read more about this event and listen to the violin here:

https://www.rmfm24.pl/fakty/polska/news-do-poznania-trafily-skrzypce-na-ktorych-gral-11-letni-henryk,nld,2312175#crp_state=1 13/01/2025.

2. **Engagement with obstacles** - Henryk Wieniawski married Isabela Hampton, the daughter of an English doctor, despite her family's initial opposition. His future father-in-law felt that the musician's life would not provide financial stability. Wieniawski had to prove his worth before he was allowed to marry.
3. **A virtuoso like Paganini** - Wieniawski was compared to legendary violinist Niccolò Paganini because of his virtuosity. However, it wasn't just the technique, but also the extraordinary emotionality and passion in the game that made the audience compare him to the Italian master.
4. **Composer Competition** - In the years 1956-1990, Henryk Wieniawski Composer Competition was also held in Poznań.
5. **The winners of the Violin Competition** - among the winners are father and son - David (1935, 2nd prize) and Igor (1952, 1st prize) Oistrakh. David Oistrakh became the winner of the Wieniawski Competition "until" at the age of 27. For comparison, Piotr Janowski won at the age of 16, Piotr Pławner and Bartłomiej Nizioł were 17 years old. The winner of the 1st edition, 15 year-old Ginette Neveu, died at the age of 30 in a plane crash together with her brother, pianist Jean, carrying a Stradivarius violin from 1730. The recordings of the artist have been happily preserved: https://www.wieniawski.pl/ginette_neveu.html
6. **Wieniawski's children**, Henryk and Isabelle had eight children. Three died in very early childhood. Only the youngest daughter, Irena, who composed songs, violin and piano under the pseudonym Poldowski, took up the musical ability of her parents.

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