

Renata SUCHOWIEJKO (Cracow)

**Edward Wolff in the  
*Revue et Gazette Musicale de Paris*:  
Perspectives on a Musician's Legacy.**

The presence and role of Polish musicians in French culture of the nineteenth century have not been the subject of research until now. Historical studies refer to this important topic only indirectly, and the writings of musicologists tend to concentrate almost exclusively on Chopin. But Paris attracted Polish musicians throughout the century. They went there in a search for fame or to study, driven by the desperate situation in their homeland or simply by choice. Some of them stayed there permanently, others returned to Poland with a considerable wealth of knowledge and experience. For a hundred years many eminent Polish performers and composers passed through the concert halls of Paris. One of them, almost unknown and forgotten today, was Edward Wolff (1814–1880), who spent most of his life in the French capital.

The Parisian musical press carefully followed Wolff's career. The *Revue et Gazette Musicale* was particularly favourable to him, while less was written about him in *La France Musicale* and in *Le Ménestrel*. Wolff's name featured regularly for more than 40 years in the columns of the *Gazette*<sup>1</sup>. They commented on his performances

---

<sup>1</sup> Information on Wolff appears in various columns of the *Gazette*. Reviews of his works can be found in "Revue critique" and "Bibliographie musicale". Concert reviews are in "Concerts", "Auditions musicales", "Auditions et Concerts", "Concerts et

in France and abroad, printed reviews of newly published works and even reported on his health problems, noting each of his returns to Paris after lengthy absences. This material is an important source of knowledge about his life and works. It reveals not only many unknown facts and details essential to a biography of the pianist, but also constitutes a basis for considering his works. Founded by Schlesinger in 1834, the *Revue et Gazette Musicale de Paris* was the most important musical weekly of the epoch. Until its closure in 1880 the *Gazette* occupied a leading position in the musical press. Not only did it inform; it created opinion.

Wolff went to Paris in 1835, but was not immediately noticed by the musical press. His name appeared for the first time in the columns of the *Gazette* in 1839, and from 1840 it remained there permanently. Most press comment about him, mainly reviews of his work, dates from the 1840s. In later years concert reviews prevailed, and from them one can also learn about the performances of new compositions. The first press reactions, albeit somewhat delayed, were very enthusiastic from the beginning, and such promotion certainly helped the budding composer. Reviewing his works (*Quatre Rapsodies, Deux Nocturnes, Scherzo*) in 1840, Maurice Bourges recognised them as exceptional among piano “production” at that time, which he quickly dismissed as only pleasant to the ear and attractive to the eye; in his view, contemporary pianists were not interested in stirring the imagination and hearts of their listeners. He regarded Wolff’s works on the other hand as the expression of ‘true poetry born from a soul which not only knows how to feel, but also how to render it’<sup>2</sup>. Bourges ended his analysis with the flattering conclusion that ‘the author possesses genius in the widest meaning of the word, comparable to Liszt in execution and to Chopin in composition’<sup>3</sup>. Wolff’s debut was a success. Thanks

---

auditions musicales de la semaine”. Another source of information (usually short accounts of journeys, appearances and health) is to be found in “Nouvelles”. Concerts in the provinces and abroad were commented upon in “Correspondance particulière”, “Chronique départementale” and “Chronique étrangère”.

<sup>2</sup> *Revue et Gazette Musicale* 18, 11 January 1840, p. 147: ‘il y a de la véritable poésie, émanée d’un âme qui sait sentir et, mieux encore, qui sait revêtir ses sensations d’une enveloppe caractéristique’.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*: ‘l’auteur [...] a du génie dans la plus vaste acception du mot, qu’il marche de paire avec Liszt pour l’exécution, avec Chopin pour la composition’.

to favourable circumstances he was placed in the first rank of contemporary pianist-composers.

In 1841 his *Quatre Mazurkas* appeared alongside the compositions of Thalberg, Heller, Pixis and Liszt in the *Album des Pianistes* published by the *Gazette*. Also that year *La France Musicale* published its *Album des Pianistes* including selected works by Kalkbrenner, Bertini, Osborne, Chopin, Katski and Wolff, while in 1842 Schlesinger published *Keepsake des Pianistes* including, among others, works by Chopin, Doehler, Heller, Henselt, Rosellen, Thalberg and Wolff. Such collective “albums” promoted artists and gave the public a sampling of various composers’ styles. Wolff’s reputation undoubtedly benefitted greatly from them. At the same time Maurin immortalised him in the famous lithograph *Chopin et les pianistes contemporains* in the company of Rosenhain, Doehler, Dreyschock, Thalberg, Henselt and Liszt. He was honoured by the presence of the royal family at a performance in Eu in 1845 when he played his own nocturnes and etudes. According to the *Gazette* the distinguished audience ‘complimented him highly’ and even presented him with a generous gift<sup>4</sup>.

Wolff’s etudes particularly interested and pleased the critics of the *Gazette*. Henri Blanchard analysed them for the first time in 1839. Acknowledging the artistic value of the *Études en formes des préludes* Op. 21 he stated that the composition showed not only a deep knowledge of technical execution but also creative imagination<sup>5</sup>. He appreciated the freshness and charm of the themes and also praised Wolff’s competence in handling harmonic nuances and interesting accompaniment. He recognised some fragments (quite rightly) as too complicated from the point of view of form, but immediately asserted that ‘it is a hundred times better to be accused of overrefinement than of banality’<sup>6</sup>. Blanchard returned to these same works in 1840, referring at the same time to an opinion expressed by Thalberg, who was enchanted by them. He even confessed that he himself would have wanted to be their author. His delight was undoubtedly sincere, since we learn later from the *Gazette* that he included the *Études* Op. 20 and Op. 50 in his

---

<sup>4</sup> RGM 37, 14 August 1845, p. 303.

<sup>5</sup> RGM 24, 13 June 1839, p. 195.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*: ‘il vaut cent fois mieux être taxé de recherche que de banalité’.

teaching material<sup>7</sup>. In his second review, Blanchard again highly praised the etudes and summed them up as follows:

... they are preludes, caprices, thoughts thrown onto the paper as they came to the composer; but written with purity, always in an elegant and original style [...] one can see in them the musician-poet, but a poet creator who does not search for inspiration, who takes it as it comes, audacious, bizarre, graceful, sudden, sometimes mannered, stormy or misty, as German taste wishes it<sup>8</sup>.

This attention to the “German” character of his inspiration carries a certain pejorative connotation. In Blanchard’s view violent emotions did not blend with the “French” idea of good taste. Connections with the German school did not, however, limit the composer’s individualism because ‘even if Wolff belongs to the German school his works show only this about him; he is the first who has given such individual and capricious forms to piano études’<sup>9</sup>. Blanchard also introduced his own classification of the etudes, dividing them into two groups: those which remain at the level of technical exercises — nos. 1, 2, 4, 5, 13, 15, 17 — and those which possess a higher artistic value. Of the latter he prized first of all the originality of nos. 7 and 14, the sublime, but simple, character of no. 14, the dynamism and brilliance shown in nos. 22 to 24, the successful combination of melodic and harmonic elements in no. 8, and the clever use of the left hand in no. 10. In evaluating these works, Blanchard took into consideration various criteria as well as stylistic and technical features and sensuous effects. He concluded his opinion with a short but clear statement: ‘the aim of this collection is to kindle new ideas, if they are to be found in the heads of our musicians and pianists’<sup>10</sup>.

---

<sup>7</sup> RGM 43, 27 October 1844, p. 360.

<sup>8</sup> RGM 50, 23 August 1840, p. 436: ‘Ce sont des préludes, des caprices, des pensées jetées sur le papier comme elles sont venues au compositeur; mais écrites avec pureté, d’un style toujours élégant et neuf. [...] On voit dans ces pensées jetées ça et là le musicien poète; mais poète créateur qui ne cherche pas l’inspiration, qui la prend comme elle vient, audacieuse, bizarre, gracieuse, abrupte et parfois maniérée, fouguese ou vaporeuse comme la veut le goût allemand.’

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> RGM 50, 23 August 1840, p. 436: ‘si M. Edouard Wolff appartient à l’école allemande, son faire ne relève que de lui; il est le premier qui ait donné ces formes

In 1841 Blanchard once again reviewed Wolff's études, this time along with the *24 Nouvelles Études* Op. 50 dedicated to Thalberg. In his article he returned to some thoughts expressed in the previous article, and even quoted his last paragraph literally. In this review Blanchard surveyed all the compositions one after another, but paid special attention to some. He adopted verbal categories as the basis of his appraisal, acknowledging the best compositions as being graceful and light (nos. 2 and 17), melodious and noble (no. 5), beautiful and clear (no. 9), heroic and dramatic (no. 11), naive and poignant (no. 16). Blanchard employed colourful metaphors to capture his impressions, for example hearing in Etude no. 3 the rush of sea waves, and in no. 19 the rumble of volcanoes (Vesuvius and Etna!). At the same time he defended the right to free description of musical expressivity, as if wanting to forestall accusations of his comparisons being too picturesque. As confirmation of his opinion of the *Études* op. 50 Blanchard quoted the remarks of contemporary pianists: 'this is the opinion of Thalberg, Doehler, Rosenhain, Hallé, Fontana and many other eloquent exponents of the new school [...] who consider that Edward Wolff has entered the first rank of pianist-composers thanks to his new études'<sup>11</sup>. In 1853 Leon Kreutzer published a critique of these same compositions<sup>12</sup> maintaining that the purpose of the étude is not only to be useful but also to please. He rated nos. 2, 9, 10, 13, 17 and 19 most highly, referring critically only to a fragment in no. 10 in which the composer introduced an irregular rhythmic section which in his view was unjustified by the logic of the development. Kreutzer also briefly surveyed the *Études faciles* op. 90 compositions full of charm appropriate for piano beginners. Wolff's études, like no other of his works, evoked a strong response in the columns of the *Gazette*. Their value as teaching material was also appreciated by Fétis and Moscheles, who included two compositions in their *Méthode des méthodes de piano*.

---

indépendantes et capricieuses à des études de piano; RGM 56, 24 October 1841, p. 470: [...] il est l'un des premiers [...].'

<sup>11</sup> RGM 56, 24 October 1841. p. 470: 'C'est l'opinion de Thalberg, de Doehler, de Rosenhain, de Hallé, de Fontana et tant d'autres éloquents interprètes de la nouvelle école [...] ils estiment comme nous que, par ses nouvelles études de piano, Edouard Wolff s'est placé au premier rang des pianistes compositeurs.'

<sup>12</sup> RGM 15, 10 April 1853, pp. 132–133.

Piano pieces in a national style played an important role in Wolff's work as a composer. The invocation of native traditions gave his music a special feature which critics often noted. Kreutzer maintained it was evident in all his compositions: 'whether they are Polish songs, etudes, melodies we find the same character, more or less expressed. One can say this is the flower of his talent which distinguishes him from all these composers whose shapeless muse reveals nothing of its origin'<sup>13</sup>. The national character of his works was positively received by the French public, not only in the period after the Uprising but later as well. His *Chansons polonaises* enjoyed unflagging popularity for many years. Even Marmontel praised them in his book *Les Virtuoses contemporains*: 'they are indeed Wolff's melodic thoughts and not national songs inspired by Chopin. Let us acknowledge Wolff who, too often, in his deep admiration for the master imitated his style'<sup>14</sup>.

The "Polishness" of his works took on a special meaning in the context of the political situation in Poland. It was an object of ecstatic commentaries in which the romantic image of the martyred Polish nation was prominent. It was said of his *Chansons polonaises* that 'they are simple and completely steeped in local colour [...] they are sad melodies, brief, not too developed, but allowing one to dream about the absent and oppressed native land. It is rare in contemporary music to know how to rouse thoughts with strong imagination'<sup>15</sup>. In a similar vein Marmontel again in 1882 stated: 'in this artist we find the strength of the national spirit, the expression of an extraordinarily strong link, which even death cannot sever, a childhood rocked to sleep by melodies sometimes

---

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.: 'Dans toutes les oeuvres de M. Wolff, quelles qu'elles soient chansons polonaises, études, mélodies, ce caractère se retrouve, plus ou moins apparent, plus ou moins caché. C'est pour ainsi dire le bouquet de son talent; c'est ce qui le distingue du plus grand nombre de ses confrères dont la muse fade ne révèle en rien son origine.'

<sup>14</sup> Antoine MARMONTEL *Les virtuoses contemporains*. Paris 1882, p. 109: 'Ce sont bien les pensées mélodiques d'Edouard Wolff et non des chants nationaux inspirés de Chopin. Constatons ce fait tout à l'honneur de Wolff, qui trop souvent, dans sa vive admiration pour le maître, imitait son style.'

<sup>15</sup> RGM 21, 23 May 1847, p. 174: 'son naïves et tout empreintes de couleur locale [...] Ce sont des mélodies tristes, à l'haleine courte et peu développée, mais elle font rêver à la patrie absente, opprimée, et la musique moderne qui éveille une pensée est rare par la fantaisie qui court.'

lively, sometimes wistful, in a melancholic tonality recalling the East<sup>16</sup>. In describing Wolff's "Polish" style, attention was usually paid to such features as "simplicity", "melancholy", "spirituality" and "local colour", which point to the distinctive, sensual atmosphere that Polish music evoked for the French listener. It was linked with something distant and unknown, and at the same time a strongly romantic and deeply moving imagination.

Chopin's genius had a profound influence on Wolff, who freely borrowed melodic phrases, rhythmic schemes and harmonic ideas from his fellow Pole. Wolff was often compared to Chopin, but this similarity was not at all a source of criticism. Already in 1839 Blanchard noted that Wolff's playing was characterised by a Chopinesque elegance, adding, however, that sometimes he played too forcefully, producing a somewhat 'convulsive sound'<sup>17</sup>. A review of the Mazurkas noted that they are 'all stamped with this simplicity, this melancholy [...] this national character which for the first time in Paris Chopin gave us a foretaste in his elegant compositions. The romance, waltz, lied, scherzo, even song, but all subtle, spiritual, and refined'<sup>18</sup>.

Marmontel criticised Wolff's tendency to imitate and regretted his inclination to assimilate another composer's style. He wrote of the *Allegro de Concert* Op. 39: 'this work dedicated to Chopin could have been signed by the master himself, so striking is the similarity of style'<sup>19</sup>. Nevertheless this did not prevent Marmontel from giving it to his students as an exercise. The different attitude of Marmontel and the reviewers in the *Gazette* to Wolff's imitation of Chopin's style probably results from the distance in time which separates

---

<sup>16</sup> A. MARMONTEL op. cit., p. 104: 'Cette puissance de la nationalité, l'influence pour ainsi dire posthume d'une filiation brisée, nous allons la retrouver chez un artiste dont l'enfance avait été bercée par des airs tantôt vifs, tantôt langoureux, d'une tonalité mélancolique rappelant l'Orient.'

<sup>17</sup> RGM 24, 13 June 1839, p. 195.

<sup>18</sup> RGM 41, 11 July 1841, p. 337: 'tout empreintes de cette naïveté, de cette mélancolie [...] de ce caractère national dont, le premier à Paris, Chopin nous a donné l'avant goût dans ses élégantes compositions. C'est de la romance, de la valse, du lied, du scherzo, voire même de la chansonnette; mais tout cela fin, spirituel, d'une nature choisie.'

<sup>19</sup> A. MARMONTEL op. cit., p. 108: 'l'oeuvre dédiée à Chopin aurait pu être signée par le maître, tant l'analogie de style est frappante'.

their critiques. Marmontel evaluated Wolff's works from the perspective of the 1880s, when not only public taste and aesthetic norms but also the reception of Chopin's music had radically changed. Marmontel was concerned about the wave of "Chopinomania" and its negative effects as he perceived them. On the other hand, the reviews of the 1840s were written in different circumstances, and in them we find the most frequent comparison of Wolff with Chopin. Meant simply by way of enhancement, such comparison raised the esteem in which Wolff's compositions were held, their intriguing aura and expressive sound interesting reviewers more than any potential criticism of stylistic similarity. In copying Chopin's stylistic idiom in a simplified version Wolff reached out to a wider public. His "popularization" helped listeners become familiar with the complexities of Chopin's music. Even as late as 1848 Chouquet was warning amateur pianists to stay away from Chopin's compositions: 'this music is certainly original, perfectly written, arouses interest and often commands applause; but this genre is only suitable for few people and one ought not to abuse it for it is too intricate and perilous'<sup>20</sup>. The "simplification" of Chopin, however, carried certain dangers, leading to a trivialization which Wolff himself contributed to. It is difficult, nevertheless, to gain a proper perspective of his compositions when setting them against Chopin's achievements and ignoring broader historical-social contexts and factors.

Wolff belonged to a different category of composer-pianists, having other needs and ideals and a different role to fulfill. He wrote music aimed at a wide public, answering their needs and satisfying the wishes of the publishers. He acquired popularity thanks to his arrangements of themes from well-known operas, which countless amateur pianists played with enjoyment. Simple arrangements of famous arias (for example, for four hands), which were a constant part of the salon repertoire, enjoyed considerable success. This sort of composition often arose from the requests of publishers who printed them in many editions. They were an excellent means of popularising fashionable operas. Thanks to Wolff's cooperation with

---

<sup>20</sup> *La France Musicale* 9–10, 5 March 1848, p. 68: 'Cette musique-là a certainement de l'originalité: rendu avec perfection, elle excite la curiosité et commande souvent les applaudissements; mais ce genre ne convient qu'à bien peu de personnes, et l'on ne doit pas en abuser, car il est plein de périls et d'inconvénients.'



the famous violinists Bériot and Vieuxtemps, many duets with operatic themes became popular and were performed later by them in concerts. Wolff's skill in arranging was frequently praised in the pages of the *Gazette*. Blanchard commented picturesquely on a duet by Wolff and Bériot based on motifs from the opera *Robert-le-Diable*, using the following terms: 'to arrange thus is to create or to recapitulate eloquently the spirit and taste of a great work; it is to gather the flowers in a large meadow and to turn them into a precious honey for all to taste and savour with renewed pleasure'<sup>21</sup>.

Wolff's dances also enjoyed great popularity in the salons. His waltzes and tarantellas were highly praised. These compositions, delicate and dazzling, were intended to please, to give enjoyment and to inspire a light-hearted mood without excessive engagement of the intellect. As Blanchard wrote about the collection of waltzes *Souvenir de Pornic*: 'these melodies are only trifles, musical sparks, but inspired delightful trifles and sparks which scintillate with energy, full of melodic and harmonic spirit. [...] Here is charm, finesse, melodic freshness, distinguished harmony without too much refinement thrown quickly on the paper'<sup>22</sup>. The author even asserted that one could "use" these compositions to improve well-being since they possess 'pharmaceutical-musical [properties] which suit the capricious, phlegmatic and hypochondriac, and especially persons attacked by spleen: keep warm'<sup>23</sup>.

Many listeners also enjoyed compositions full of lyricism and poetry and leading to a state of melancholy and reverie, including *rêveries*, *prières*, *mélodies*, *pensées poétiques* and also nocturnes, ballades and barcarolles. Wolff often wrote such pieces for amateur

---

<sup>21</sup> RGM 44, 12 July 1840, p. 381: 'arranger ainsi c'est créer, c'est résumer avec éloquence, avec autant d'esprit que de goût, un grand ouvrage; c'est butiner sur un vaste parterre de fleurs pour en prendre l'essence et en composer un miel précieux que chacun goûte et savoure avec un nouveau plaisir'.

<sup>22</sup> RGM 55, 27 September 1840, pp. 477–478: 'Ces mélodies ne sont que des bagatelles, que des étincelles musicales, mais des bagatelles délicieuses, tout inspirées, des étincelles qui scintillent de verve, d'esprit mélodique et harmonique. [...] C'est de la grâce, de l'esprit, de la fraîcheur mélodique, de l'harmonie distinguée sans trop de recherche jetée rapidement sur le papier'.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.: 'pharmaceutico-musicale qui convient parfaitement aux humoristes, phlegmatiques, hypocondriaques, et surtout aux personnes attaquées du spleen: prenez chaud'.

performers. These works had to be attractive, accessible and moving, capable of giving pleasure and of “ornamenting” the salon. They arose from the needs of the moment, reflecting changing trends and fashions but continually enjoying great success. However, there were works of greater artistic ambitions in Wolff’s oeuvre and also those which required excellent technique from pianists. Sparkling fantasias and caprices scored triumphs in the concert halls.

Marmontel positively rated Wolff’s contribution to the development of piano music. He recognised him as the creator of a great number of works:

charming, original, perfectly written to show off the piano’s quality of sound and the virtuosity of the performers. The general structure of his phrasing was suited to the hand [...] and clear melody was produced without overpedalling or overwhelming the piano with noisy chords or forced effects. One feels that all these works are written not only by a composer, but also by a skilfull virtuoso<sup>24</sup>.

Wolff composed quickly and with ease, and as a result his legacy is enormous. His “productivity” was even the subject of press comment. Kastner asserted somewhat caustically that it was enough only to take your eye off him for a moment and a rich collection of new compositions would suddenly appear. Kreutzer on the other hand summed him up as follows: ‘I would prefer that Wolff had concentrated on several serious compositions and not frittered the precious qualities, which few pianists have been so endowed with as he, on a thousand light pieces’<sup>25</sup>.

Wolff almost entirely played his own compositions at concerts. Most warmly applauded were his *Chansons polonaises*, *Chansons bachiques*, *Études*, *Tarentelle fantastique*, *Marche triomphale* and

---

<sup>24</sup> A. MARMONTEL op. cit., p. 107: ‘charmantes, originales, parfaitement écrites pour faire valoir la sonorité du piano, la virtuosité des exécutants. La contexture générale des traits familiers à Wolff est bien sous la main [...] enfin le chant, bien en dehors, se produit sans abus de pédales, sans écrasement du piano par des accords strident ou des effets de force exagérée. On sent que toutes ces oeuvres de piano sont écrites non seulement par un compositeur, mais aussi par un virtuose habile’.

<sup>25</sup> RGM 15, 10 April 1853, p. 133: ‘ce que je désire [...] c’est de voir M. Wolff concentrer dans quelques morceaux sévères plutôt que de les disperser au sein de mille oeuvres légères, les précieuses qualités dont peu de pianistes ont été aussi généreusement doués que lui’.

*Bacchanale*. Reviews, however, give more information about the works themselves than on his performances. They noticed Wolff the pianist through the prism of his compositions. After one of his concerts in the Salle Erard his capabilities were appreciated thus: 'he is known as one of the most talented and mature of pianists who combines purity, elegance and energy with a rare perfection of style. As a composer, he adds to all his work a stamp of originality and distinction quite characteristic. His melodic ideas are further enhanced by most interesting harmonic work'<sup>26</sup>.

Wolff's concerts were scrupulously noted by the *Gazette*. Besides his own concerts Wolff willingly performed also in salons (musical evenings with Massart, Mocker, Dufour, Pape, Herz and Clara Pfeiffer), accompanied soloists (for example, Van der Heyden, Herman, Seligman, Lecieux), and played duets for four hands with Cohen, Jaëll, Ketterer, Meyer and Stamati. In the summer season he played at resorts, like Ostend, which drew not only fashionable audiences but also first-class performers. He was also connected with the house of Erard. Not only did he perform in Erard's salons, but he also promoted his instruments during his travels as well as at the World Exhibition in 1878. In 1862 he undertook a journey to Romania, performing on the way in Germany and Austria. He spent eight months in Bucharest where he gave concerts, composed and presented lectures. The public there received him warmly, which was reported in the *Gazette*. In 1868 Wolff went on a long concert tour in north-west France. He performed with the Ulmann group which was formed, among others, by Patti, Seligman, Vieuxtemps and Godefroid. According to the *Gazette* they enjoyed great success, the public being especially enthusiastic about Wolff's *Tarantella* and *Bolero* and duets from *Obéron* and *Don Juan* performed with Vieuxtemps.

Wolff occupied an important position in Parisian musical life. He was one of many talented pianist-composers within the heady artistic climate of the epoch, and his work spans a broad musical spectrum, even if it is deeply rooted in contemporary musical

---

<sup>26</sup> RGM 16, 17 April 1864, p. 124: 'on sait que c'est un de nos pianistes les mieux doués et les plus complets, qui joint à la pureté, à l'élégance, à l'énergie de l'exécution, une rare perfection du style. Comme compositeur, il donne à toutes ses productions un cachet d'originalité et de distinction tout à fait caractéristique. Ses idées mélodiques sont encore rehaussées par un travail harmonique des plus intéressants.'

language, not overstepping its norms and boundaries. He fully conformed to the public's requirements, acutely aware of its needs. Blanchard accurately characterised the condition of a contemporary pianist, torn between performing, composing and teaching:

... three harpies attack and devour the existence of a pianist [...] first, working on technique, then the study of composition, and finally the boredom of giving lessons; these three things diametrically opposed in their consequences often neutralise the artist's future [...] If you add to this the sad necessity of earning a living and fulfilling the wishes of publishers who only invoke the muse of commerce, and expect, and even demand, waltzes, galops, fantasias, all these arranged pieces [...] you can only conclude that the mission of a pianist-composer in this musical world is arduous and difficult to accomplish<sup>27</sup>.

Wolff fitted this description admirably. Indeed, his mission was not easy, especially in an era of piano geniuses. However, he managed to secure a place for himself and make his own contribution to the colourful mosaic of Parisian musical life, an achievement which finds living proof throughout the *Revue et Gazette Musicale de Paris*.

---

<sup>27</sup> RGM 50, 23 August 1840, p. 435: 'Trois stryges assiègent, dévorent l'existence du pianiste [...] C'est d'abord le travail mécanique de l'instrument, ensuite l'étude de la composition, puis l'ennuyeuse, l'atroce nécessité de donner des leçons, trois choses diamétralement opposées dans leurs résultats, et qui neutralisent souvent l'avenir de l'artiste. [...] Si vous ajoutez à ces tristes nécessités de la vie et de l'art matériels, les exigences des éditeurs, qui ne vous permettent que d'invoquer la muse commerciale, qui vous demandent, vous imposent des valse, des galops, des fantaisies, des morceaux soit-disant arrangés [...] on conviendra que la mission du pianiste compositeur en ce monde musicale est ardue et difficile à remplir.'