

**He was considered an extremely difficult person, torn, living in disagreement with himself. How would you describe Andrzej Czajkowski?**

To live in harmony with yourself you need to know who you are, what you want and where it goes. I have the impression that Tchaikovsky never managed to find the answer to these basic questions that each of us usually asks at the threshold of adulthood. Music for him was not so much self-expression as a way of escape, a cry of despair for a man who, because of his pain, cannot understand himself or communicate with the world.

**He was considered a genius, someone of extraordinary talent, and yet he did not make the career he deserved. Artur Rubinstein on the question of why it supposedly happened: he did not care. Why didn't he care?**

In psychotherapy, it is often said that the key to the present is the past. Perhaps Andrzej Czajkowski did not care about his career and development, because he really did not care about anything. Like many of those who went through the hell of the Holocaust, he always remained partly imprisoned among the traumatic events of that time, and this made him unable to fully engage in the present. He could not believe that after what he had gone through, interpersonal relationships, career, music, even talent, which he received as a gift of fate, can really make sense.

**He was born in 1935. What was the life of the family like before the war?**

He was born in Warsaw in a family of Jewish origin, although very assimilated, as Robert Andrzej Krauthammer. An exceptionally strong personality in this family was his grandmother Celina, a woman of independence ahead of the era. When her husband's doctor returned with a venereal disease from the front of World War I, she did not blink with him, though they had two small children. Celina married again, this time as a lawyer. She founded her own school for beauticians, ran a company producing creams under a French license. She was a very entrepreneurial and energetic woman. Her daughter Felicja, later mother of Andrzej, was completely different, spiritual, poetic. Hanna Krall in her reportage "Hamlet" describes her as "calm, thoughtful, devoid of energy and strength." After graduating from school, Felicja went to Paris, where she fell in love with a German immigrant. They soon got married and they split up just as quickly. Felicja returned to Poland, she gave birth to a son. The family led the lives of average representatives of the then middle class intelligence. And then war broke out and ruined all their peaceful world. The whole family, together with Felicja's new partner - Albert, was resettled to the ghetto.

**Did Tchaikovsky ever write about his memories of the ghetto?**

In his letters to Anita, Halina Janowska repeatedly mentions that he plans and even started writing his memories from that time. I do not know, however, whether he actually did it or what happened next with this record. I didn't get to it, so my knowledge about the period between the outbreak of war and the second half of the 1950s, when he began studying piano at Emma Altberg at the State Secondary Music School in Lodz is rudimentary. We only know that he was taken out by his grandmother in a girl's outfit, with hair dyed blond.

**Tchaikovsky's mother stayed in the ghetto with her lover. Shortly afterwards she was taken to Treblinka, where she died. He talked about her that she was his greatest friend and greatest enemy. What role did she play in his life?**

In my opinion, Felicja was a kind of shade for Andrzej, shading the brightness of the day to the end of his life. A demon who never stepped away from him, whose presence he felt constantly and from which it was impossible to free himself. A vision, an imagination, once wonderful, idealized, the greatest, sometimes devilish, hated. I think that for the rest of his life he was unable to understand the decision she made. He could not understand

why, being only 27 years old, she preferred to risk losing her life instead of trying to escape with her mother and only child.

**After the escape Andrzej and his grandmother began to function under their new name and hide on the Aryan side? How did it look like?**

This part of Andrzej's story is full of mysteries and ambiguities. For example, Hanna Krall in her reportage mentions hiding in Miss Monika's closet. Meanwhile, while working on the book "Institute of Beauty" in materials from Yad Vashem about Mady Walter, I found a letter by Janina Czajkowska vel. Celina Sandler, who testified that the selfless help in hiding on the Aryan side of her and her grandson Andrzej was given by the Walter family.

**You refer to this period in your latest book. You draw the character of a master, a music teacher who makes nothing to do with a genius child. How did you come to that?**

On the aforementioned typed certificate, someone made a manual annotation in which he emphasized that Andrzej Czajkowski aka Robert Krauthammer became a laureate of the Chopin Competition in 1955. In fact, the dozen or so words crossed out with someone's hand on the official document were a spark for my imagination. I began to search, read, ask and compose a story about what could have been happening in those foggy days. The character of Edmund Walter, Mada's husband, pre-war composer and teacher, turned out to be extremely inspiring. The vision of a genius boy who in a cruel evil world goes under the roof of a vocational educator did not give me peace until it was finally reflected in the novel. "Two Lights" is an attempt to tell the unspoken story of a genius child who grew up in inhuman times. A small man who was stigmatized by other people's choices for his whole life.

**You have a talent for inventing unusual war stories. You wrote about Antonina Zabinska, Mada Walter, now you have been seduced by Tchaikovsky. What fascinated you about him?**

This inability to live, which we discussed at the beginning. Freezing the past. Paralysis, which even a huge international success, started when Tchaikovsky became the youngest winner of the Chopin Competition in 1955, fame, money, connections, talent erecting a lasting monument, everything mortals dream about, could not dissolve.

**How did you search for materials for this book?**

I started by reading the correspondence that he spent most of his adult life with his friend Anita Halina Janowska entitled "My guardian devil ..." and "Hamlet" by Hanna Krall. Then I spent many hours in the Society of the Fryderyk Chopin Institute reading everything about Andrzej Czajkowski and the Chopin Competition from 1955. Many materials are still not digitized, so I was sitting over piles of old newspaper clippings. One of the TIFC employees has shown me considerable confidence in giving me access to these sources. He asked me not to confuse the arrangement of the sections, a large part of which was no more than 20 square cm and scattered under my fingers. I also listened to the competition recordings and many other songs performed by Tchaikovsky. I was also helped by several outstanding musicologists, without whom this novel would certainly not have its current shape.

**What is known about Tchaikovsky's musical education?**

He studied with the most outstanding teachers of that time, not only in Poland but also abroad. It is worth mentioning Lazare Lévy, Olga Iliwicka-Dabrowska, Stanislaw Szpinalski, Kazimierz Sikorski and Nadia Boulanger. They were extraordinary people, the greatest and most important figures of the music scene at the time. Artur

Rubinstein himself said about Tchaikovsky that he is "one of the best pianists of his generation, and even more is a wonderful musician". It was Rubinstein who tried to help him in his career, enabled him to cooperate with Sol Hurok, an extremely influential American impresario. He gave all the opportunities that Tchaikovsky did not take advantage of, or maybe he was not able to use.

### **Because of the trauma of the Holocaust?**

Only he and his grandmother survived the war conflagration. As I said, he never accepted his mother's decision, but he couldn't deal with the fact that he survived when so many others died. He suffered from survivor syndrome. Constant fear, tension, anxiety, remorse, lack of trust in anyone, difficulties in maintaining closer relationships - all this prevented him from living normally. In one of his letters he wrote to Halina "You can laugh and cry with all your heart, I can only with a half-mouth". I think this sentence perfectly shows that Andrzej Czajkowski was fully aware of the disability of his soul. And at the same time he was helpless against him.

### **What made Tchaikovsky so little known in Poland?**

Perhaps the fact that shortly after finishing 8th in the Chopin Competition, at the age of 21 he left the country forever. He toured with the greatest music celebrities, but these performances took place behind the Iron Curtain in Western Europe and the United States. Only fragmentary information about his achievements reached Poland. He died at the age of 46, so the system in Poland did not have time to change during his lifetime, and everything that was associated with the West was hostile and condemned to oblivion.

### **What can we do to restore the memory of him?**

Difficult question. I have a huge disagreement about forgetting about the outstanding figures of our history. I try to save them from oblivion by immortalizing them on the pages of my novels. What if someone reads "Two Lights" and begins to search for information about Andrzej Czajkowski and Edmund Walter, listen to their music, learn their history? Only by remembering can we save what has passed.