

Institute of National Remembrance

<https://ipn.gov.pl/en/digital-resources/articles/7817,Strike-for-a-Chopin-piano.html>

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Strike for a “Chopin” piano

In the years of the Solidarity’s revolution of 1980-1981 in Poland a wide social movement demanding crucial changes in the country was created. It consisted of blue and white collar workers, farmers, students...



Finally, they could fight for their rights and talk about their problems out loud. The listeners of the Wrocław State Academy of Music became part of the group as well.

Gigantic crisis

At the end of the 1980s, the country experienced a gigantic economic crisis. It affected universities too, as they were constantly underfinanced. There was a lack of literally everything. Scientists had

no modern equipment necessary for conducting research. There were little to none halls and rooms, and those existent often required general repairs. There was no vacancy for students in dormitories, and the occupied rooms did not live up to the most basic hygiene standards. At the Wrocław "Armadillo" (dormitory of the University of Wrocław) there were only several showers in one, big hall and rooms were often wormy. It was similar with the students' canteens which were visited by the State Sanitary Inspection on the daily basis. The situation of the State Academy of Music in Wrocław was not an exception in this regard. There, there was a serious lack of equipment needed to learn how to play on instruments. In the case of this university it was a crucial matter, without proper instruments it was impossible to study.

Promised pianos

In May 1980, the Ministry of Art and Culture promised two Steinway pianos for the school brought for the Chopin Competition in 1975 – they were supposed to be handed to the university after the Chopin Competition of 1980. It greatly pleased the academic environment, as it were to be the first high-class piano in the entire 32 years-long history of the State Academy of Music. Other instruments were 60 or 70 years old and were unrepairable. However, in the autumn it turned out that the school would only receive one piano. Students and lecturers could not agree with that decision, since the promised pianos were essential for the normal functioning of the music academy. The enraged students sent their delegation to the ministry where they

encountered a wall in the form of officials who showed a total lack of interest in the hard situation of the school.

Students acquired information that three high-class pianos (two Steinways and one Bösendorfer), brought for the 1980 Chopin Competition, were being kept in the warehouse of the National Philharmonic and demanded to give them to the State Academy of Music in Wrocław. The Ministry promised to review the situation by the end of the year. In the case of the inability to send these pianos, the officials pledged to order an “imported” instrument, what in reality meant purchasing a Czechoslovakian “Petrof” piano. The students could not agree to that and were determined to get the best instruments for the university.

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