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Konik, Marcin, Craig Sapp, Jacek Iwaszko, Marcelina Chojecka,
and Emilia Ziętek, creators. Polish Digital Scores

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Polish Digital Scores.

Warsaw: Fryderyk Chopin Institute, 2019. Accessed 18 July 2023.
polishscores.org.

Despite the rise of world-famous composers such as Henryk Górecki (1933–2010), Witold Lutosławski (1913–94), and Krzysztof Penderecki (1933–2020) in the twentieth century, not to mention the towering Fryderyk Chopin (1810–49) the century prior, the Polish people have repeatedly noted insufficient representation of Polish music in digital repositories.⁸ Compounding this issue, the turbulent nineteenth and twentieth centuries were particularly destructive for the country's cultural heritage institutions. In the Second World War, the first of the German bombs fell on 1 September 1939, and the country had surrendered to its invaders by 27 September. Within that month alone, numerous libraries in Warsaw and throughout the country were destroyed. While national institutions were able to remove their most valuable collections to Canada, other institutes were not so fortunate.⁹ The initial destruction caused by bombs and artillery shells was followed up by a concerted campaign by the Nazis to destroy and loot many of the collections that survived. By the time the USSR pushed the Nazis out in 1945, Polish librarians estimated that 66 per cent (15 million) of the country's volumes had been destroyed or looted.¹⁰ But the Nazi's culling of Poland's musical heritage was only the start, as surveillance and intimidation were employed behind the Iron Curtain to curate state-approved Polish musical culture until after the so-called political thaw of 1956.¹¹ Given the calamitous events of the past two centuries, Polish Digital Scores is a welcome and much overdue effort to preserve and disseminate the musical artifacts of Polish heritage that have survived, including many works that will be of interest to early modern music scholars and performers.

8. Fryderyk Chopin Institute, "About."

9. See Biblioteka Narodowa, "Decimation."

10. Borin, "Embers."

11. One case study in the hazards of music-making in Communist Poland is Mieczysław Weinberg; see Elphick, *Music*.

Polish Digital Scores is part of a larger project entitled Polish Music Heritage in Open Access run by the Fryderyk Chopin Institute, which seeks to provide access to “the most important and representative works of Polish music from the 16th to 19th centuries.”¹² Between August 2019 and July 2022, the project generated high-resolution images of over 25,000 musical sources, making them available for download as JPEG, TIFF and PDF files. It also created or updated the records of nearly 34,000 Polish musical sources in the Répertoire International des Sources Musicales (RISM) database (rism.info). This represents a dramatic expansion and improvement of Polish representation in RISM, as almost one-third of the nearly 98,000 Polish records in the database have been added or edited by this project. Such a collaboration of digitization units and cataloguers would be impressive in any three-year span, but it is even more so considering the limited access that project workers had to musical sources during COVID-19 lockdowns.

The nationalistic scope of Polish Digital Scores provides early modern scholars with ready access to digital transcriptions of the works of Polish composers, such as Cyprian Bazylik (c. 1535–c. 1600), Mikołaj Gomółka (c. 1535–c. 1591), Grzegorz Gorczycki (c. 1667–1734), and Mikołaj Zieleński (fl. 1611). However, it also includes works of international composers whose music has come to be stored in Polish institutions, including works by Pierre Certon (c. 1510–72), Luca Marenzio (1533–99), Orlando di Lasso (c. 1532–94), and Cristóbal de Morales (c. 1500–53).

One of the core goals of Polish Digital Scores is to provide access to and analysis of Polish music. To this end, the project has generated digital editions, including both diplomatic transcriptions and modernized renderings, of musical sources held in Polish heritage institutions. The project website offers users a variety of search and filtering tools to facilitate source discovery and access (Fig. 1), such as filtering pieces by composer, genre, instrument, and mode, to name just a few. Users can also limit returns to only those with modern transcriptions (M), images (I), or lyrics (T).

12. Fryderyk Chopin Institute, “About.”



Fig. 1. Search page for Polish Digital Scores.

When the user selects a particular piece of music, they are taken to a page that provides basic metadata about the item, including composer and source location, along with a rendering of the edition (Fig. 2). Among the metadata, users will find links to external sites and authorities such as International Music Score Library Project (imslp.org), RISM, Virtual International Authority File (viaf.org), and Wikipedia. They can also access the images of the original source, which can either be viewed through external digital libraries such as Federacja Bibliotek Cyfrowych (fbc.pionier.net.pl) or Polona (polona.pl), or, where IIF functionality is available, by double-clicking on a single note (Fig. 3). For each piece, users can search for specific pitches or text, and they can perform basic text and melodic and rhythmic analyses. For researchers and performers alike, the online renderings can be customized, including stem directions and modernized clefs (among many other options), and the score can even be transposed (Fig. 4). The source files can then be downloaded in various formats including MIDI, MusicXML (compatible with score transcription software such as Finale, Sibelius, and MuseScore), and PDF.

The screenshot displays the 'Polish Digital Scores' website interface. At the top, there are navigation icons (back, forward, search, etc.) and flags for EN and PL. Below the header, a profile for Mikolaj Gomółka (c. 1535 – c. 1591) is shown, with links to IMSLP, RISM, VIAF, Wikidata, and Wikipedia. To the right, the Polish National Library (PL-Wn: SD XVI.Qu.273) is mentioned. The main content area features the title 'Melodiae na psalterz polski' and the text 'CIX. Boże, którego chwala w mych uścich wieczna,'. Below this, a musical score for four voices (CANTVS., ALTVS., TENOR., BASSVS.) is displayed, with lyrics in Polish and Latin. The score is written on staves with mensural notation and includes a key signature of one flat.

Fig. 2. Score display page for Polish Digital Scores.

The screenshot shows the 'Kancjonał Zamoyskich' score display page. It features a musical score for four voices (CANTVS., ALT., TENOR., BAS.) with lyrics in Polish. A pop-up window displays an IIF-enhanced source view, showing a historical manuscript page with the title 'CANTVS.' and the text 'o ochotnem sercem ciebie wyslarciam'. The manuscript page includes a musical staff with mensural notation and a large initial 'S'. The pop-up window also shows the URL 'zas.bn.org.pl/iiif/1170374/1170332.tif/689,447,1932,780/full/0/default.jpg'.

Fig. 3. IIF-enhanced source view on Polish Digital Scores.



Fig. 4. Score customizations available on Polish Digital Scores.

Such a wide array of technical capacities are made possible by editions that are stored in Humdrum syntax, a format that was originally developed by David Huron in the 1980s as part of the Humdrum Toolkit for computer-aided analysis.¹³ The Verovio Humdrum Viewer (verovio.humdrum.org) allows the editions to be displayed on the Polish Digital Scores website, and it facilitates playback of a MIDI rendering of the edition. Thanks to the collaborative efforts of developers Craig Sapp and Laurent Pugin, the Humdrum files are converted to XML using the Music Encoding Initiative (MEI) schema, and users can then click the Verovio Humdrum Viewer (H) to view the Humdrum syntax next to the rendered music notation (Fig. 5). This interface provides more in-depth analyses of the music, including imitation, melisma, and dissonance analyses. It also allows users to modify the editions, enabling them to create and save their own editions, and then to export them in a variety of formats including MEI, MusicXML, and PDF.

With more than 1,700 listings from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Polish Digital Scores promises to be a valuable resource for early modern scholars of both Polish music and other international traditions. The project's reliance upon established authorities for descriptive metadata and its careful transcription of source materials lends great reliability to the data it contains. The website provides a wide array of tools for interacting with the

13. Huron, "Music." See also the "Humdrum Toolkit User Guide" (<https://www.humdrum.org/guide>).

individual editions, and though not linked on the website itself, the editions can be downloaded en masse from the project's GitHub repository (github.com/pl-wnifc/humdrum-polish-scores).

VerovioHumdrumViewer Certon, Patrem

File View Edit Analysis Scores Help

1 !!SEGMENT: pl-kk-kk-i-1--014-003 ce
2 !!censid: 15xx:725
3 !!COM: Certon, Pierre
4 !!COM-rismID: pe30006023
5 !!CDT: ~1510-1572/02/23
6 !!CNT: French
7 !!OPR: [Missa]
8 !!OTL: Patrem
9 !!OMV: 003
10 !!PDT:
11 !!AGN: Sacred; Mass
12 !!SAGS-siglum: PL-Kk
13 !!SAGS-shelfmark: Kk.I.1
14 !!SAGS-shelfwork: 014-003 M
15 !!SAGS-variant:
16 !!SAGS-altvar:
17 !!NIFC-rismSourceID: 300257954
18 !!NIFC-rismChildID: 300257968
19 !!NIFC-islandoraID: pl-kk:1
20 !!URL-pdf-islandora: https://repozytor
21 !!URL-scan: https://polish.musicsource
22 !!IIF: https://repozytorium.nifc.pl/
23 !!ONB-nifc: UWAGA: Cantus (s. 82r-90r
24 !!AIN: 1 alto 1 bass 1 soprn 1 tenor
25 !!key:
26 **kern **text **kern **
27 *part4 *part4 *part3 *p
28 *staff4 *staff4 *staff3 *s
29 *I"BASSVS *I"TENOR *
30 *I"B *I"T *
31 *Ibass *Itenor *
32 *Icvox *Icvox *
33 *clefF4 *clefC4 *
34 *k[] *k[] *
35 *d: *d: *
36 *M2/1 *M2/1 *
37 *met(C|) *met(C|) *
38 =1- =1- =1- =1-
39 *stria6 *stria6 *
40 *xywh-#640:7368,1574,2672,794 *
41 1rD 0rF -
42

CANTVS
ALTVS
TENOR
BASSVS
S
A
T
B
S

Pa - - trem om - ni - po - ten -
Pa - - trem
Fac - to - rem
- tem fac - to - rem
om - ni - po - ten - tem fac -
- po - - ten - - tem fac -

Fig. 5. Verovio Humdrum Viewer.

One of the few critiques I have of the project is that the team has yet to fully promote and document the excellent work that has been done. The team has not yet published the critical apparatus for their editorial approach, nor have they written about their workflow for ensuring data accuracy. Though both things have been discussed at meetings and conferences, it would be helpful for these to be presented on the Polish Digital Scores website itself for the enduring utility of the resource. My other critique is that the website's interface could use some further refinement. Some users may find the various

icons on the search and score display pages of the site to be confusing. For instance, they may wonder what the “M” icon is for on the search page, or what the “O” icon represents on the score display page. To their credit, the team does seem to have anticipated some of these issues by providing explanatory tooltips for each. However, some users may not be patient enough to wait for those descriptions to appear when they hover their mouse over each icon.

Given the breadth of genres, styles, time periods, and national origins of the music covered by the Polish Digital Scores project, the team has compiled a broadly relevant set of tools and analyses that will help any scholar to search, discover, and learn more about Polish cultural heritage. In the early modern context, one might quibble over the value of keyscape analyses, but the range of other analyses (melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic) are arguably helpful. Overall, the Polish Digital Scores project provides enhanced access to musical collections that deserve greater scrutiny, and it has provided the tools for navigating these collections. It represents an impressive amount of work that will continue to be of great value to the scholarly community in the future.

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