

**Jan Ekier** was born on 29 August 1913 in Cracow. It was in his home town that he first studied the piano with his piano teacher Olga Stolfowa and composition with the Franciscan father Bernardino Rizzi. In 1932 he began his musicology studies at the Jagiellonian University under Zdzisław Jachimecki. Two years later, inspired by his Cracow mentors, he moved to Warsaw to develop his pianistic and composing skills at the Warsaw Conservatory. He studied in the class of Zbigniew Drzewiecki (diploma in 1937) and Kazimierz Sikorski (diploma in 1939). Already in his university years Jan Ekier was successful as a composer – in 1936 he won the 3rd prize with his *Highlander Suite* in the Composing Competition announced by the Polish Music Publishing Society in Warsaw. He was also a successful pianist and laureate of the 8<sup>th</sup> prize at the 3<sup>rd</sup> International Chopin Piano Competition in Warsaw in 1937.

Under Nazi occupation Jan Ekier continued his musical education studying organ playing for a year under Bronisław Rutkowski in the clandestine music conservatory in Warsaw (officially functioning as Staatliche Musikschule in Warschau) which followed the pre-war curriculum. He also composed music for patriotic songs such as *Szturmówka [The Flag]* and *Na nowe drogi [For the New Paths]* using the alias „Janosik”. As a pianist, Jan Ekier was performing at secret concerts, playing the forbidden music of Fryderyk Chopin.

Jan Ekier’s artistic career truly began to bloom after the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War. The recent laureate was invited to sit on the jury of the 4th International Chopin Piano Competition in Warsaw (1949). He was also a jury member of subsequent editions of the Chopin Competition (with the exception of 1955), to become the Chairman of the jury in 1985, 1990 and 1995 and Honorary Chairman in the years 2000, 2005 and 2010. The Artist also chaired other international piano competitions, including those held in Leipzig (1964), Paris (1967), Geneva, Bolzano (1975), Munich (1977), Monzy, Tel Aviv (1977, 1980), Tokyo (1985) and Hamburg (1987).

As a performing pianist, Jan Ekier took part in many important events, such as the national celebrations connected with the return of Chopin’s heart to Warsaw. It was he who first played the *Etude in C minor Op. 10 No. 12* in the liberated Cracow in 1945. He performed in most Polish philharmonic halls, and also gave numerous concerts in Żelazowa Wola. He recorded many works of Fryderyk Chopin, including the complete *Mazurkas*, *Piano Sonatas in B flat minor* and *in B minor*, the four *Ballades*, as well as works of other composers such as Bach (*Concertos: BWV 1062, BWV 1064, BWV 1065*), Szymanowski (among other works, the *4th Symphony Concertante*), or Prokofiev (including the *7<sup>th</sup> Piano Sonata* and the *3<sup>rd</sup> Piano Concerto*). Jan Ekier also went on many concert tours, visiting Austria, Belgium, Czechoslovakia and Germany. He played under such conductors as Grzegorz Fitelberg, Zygmunt Latoszewski, Bogusław Madey, Witold Rowicki, Stanisław Skrowaczewski, Józef Wilkomirski, Stanisław Wisłocki and Bohdan Wodiczko.

In post-war years Jan Ekier also engaged himself in editorial work. Commissioned by the Polish Music Publishers (PWM) he prepared, together with Zbigniew Drzewiecki, Jan Hoffman and Adam Rieger, three volumes of *Scales and Passages* and pieces by Johann Sebastian Bach (*Easy Pieces, Little Pieces, Little Preludes*), and on his own *Two-Part Inventions, Three-Part Inventions, French Suites, English Suites* (first volume), *Italian Concert* and other publications. Soon, music publishing became Jan Ekier’s great passion and he decided to prepare the Urtext edition of the works of Fryderyk Chopin. On 4 February 1959, in connection with the celebrations of the 150th anniversary of Chopin’s birth, the Council of State approved, in the form of a resolution, the project of publication of the National Edition of the Works of Fryderyk Chopin, appointing Jan Ekier Editor-in-Chief of the new Edition. The work on the National Edition was completed in 2010.

Working on the sources of Chopin’s compositions, Jan Ekier increasingly often lectured and published on the subject. The year 1974 witnessed the publication of his book that was fundamental for the Edition that he was preparing, namely the *Introduction to the National Edition of*

*the Works of Fryderyk Chopin. Part I – Editorial Issues*. In 2012 the second part of the *Introduction* was published entitled *Performance Issues*. Other major works of Jan Ekier include *Czym jest dla mnie Chopin? [What Chopin Means to Me]* (1949), *Chopin jako pedagog [Chopin as Pedagogue]* (1966), *Jak grał Chopin? [How Chopin Played]* (1988), *Julian Fontana jako wydawca 'Oeuvres posthumes' Chopina: z zagadnień wydawania utworów pośmiertnych Fryderyka Chopina [Julian Fontana as Editor of Chopin's 'Oeuvres Posthumes': Issues Related to the Publication of Posthumous Works of Fryderyk Chopin]* (1996), *Adolf Gutmann: drugi „wielki” kopista dzieł Fryderyka Chopina [Adolf Gutmann: the Second „Great” Copyist of Chopin's Works]* (2006).

Jan Ekier is also the author of *Introductory Word* to the book by Jerzy Żurawlew *A więc Konkurs. Wspomnienia twórcy Międzynarodowych Konkursów Chopinowskich [Well Then, a Competition. Memories of the Founder of the International Chopin Piano Competitions]* (1995). In 2010 the book entitled *Cyprian Norwid, Chopin* was published, the *Introduction* to which was also written by Professor Ekier.

In 1953 Jan Ekier became piano teacher at the State Higher Music School in Warsaw. He was appointed Head of the 1st Piano Department in 1964 and remained in this post until 1969 when the 1st and the 2nd Piano Departments were merged into one joint Department, headed by Professor Ekier for the next three years (1969-1972). In 1972, the division into two separate Departments was restored and Professor Ekier was again Head of the 1<sup>st</sup> Piano Department, holding that position until the year 2000. He educated many eminent pianists; among his disciples are Jan Krzysztof Broja, Barbara Grajewska, Hanna Jaszyk, Anna Jastrzębska-Quinn, Yuko Kawai, Bronisława Kawalla, Alicja Paleta-Bugaj and Piotr Paleczny, Ella Susmanek.

Jan Ekier has been honoured with many prizes and distinctions: in 1955 he was awarded one of the most honourable state distinctions, the Officer's Cross of the Polonia Restituta Order and in 1960 the Standard of Labour Order, 2nd Class. In the years 1964 and 1974 he twice received the Minister of Culture and Arts Award; in 1974 he also received the Medal for the 30th Anniversary of the People's Republic of Poland. In 1998, he became Laureate of the first edition of the Chopin Award granted by the International Chopin Foundation. Professor Ekier was also repeatedly awarded by the rectors of his Alma Mater, the Academy of Music in Warsaw (later renamed to the University of Music). In 1995, he was awarded the degree honoris causa of that University. In 2000 he received the Commander's Cross of the Order of Poland's Restitution. In 2005, the Minister of Culture of the Republic of Poland awarded Professor Ekier with the Gold Medal „Gloria Artis Distinguished in Cultural Service”. The year 2007 brought him the Cyprian Kamil Norwid „Lifetime Achievement” Award from the Government of the Mazovia Province and three years later, in 2010, he was awarded the medal „For Merits to the Fryderyk Chopin University of Music”. In the same year Jan Ekier was awarded the Order of the White Eagle by the President of Poland Bronisław Komorowski. The year 2013 brought Professor Ekier the prestigious award of the „Gold Fryderyk” for his lifetime artistic achievements.

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