

KOPECKA née NEUFELD Wanda (1885-1942), previously MITELMAN, pianist, music teacher. She was born on 4th October 1885 in Częstochowa, the daughter of → Maurycy Neufeld and Klara née Sachs (1862-1919), sister of → Stanisław i → Natalia.

She studied (piano classes with P. Jurgens) in the Tsarist Conservatory of the Russian Society of Music in St. Petersburg, from where she graduated in 1907. Already, prior to 1914, as a pianist, she participated in the musical life of Częstochowa. She also took part in musical competitions. In the 1920s and 1930s, as a soloist, she participated in concerts in Poland and abroad. In November 1930, with the symphony orchestra of the Warsaw Philharmonic, she performed at a concert in Warsaw. During this period, she also gave concerts in Częstochowa, mainly during events organised by the local “Lutnia” and “Lira” musical societies.

From circa 1912, she was active in teaching. She taught piano in her apartment at I Aleja 10. Her pupils came, mostly, from well-known Jewish families. Many times, they appeared at “student performances”, most often at the “Lutnia” hall at ul. Dąbrowskiego 14. After 1925, they performed in the Fire Brigade hall and, from 1930, in the chamber hall of the local theatre on ul. Kilińskiego.

Following the concert of Kopecka’s pupils, on 28th June 1932, which was the last performance by the popular pianist’s pupils, the event’s reviewer, Edward Mąkosza, in the “Gońiec Częstochowski” wrote, “The show was a new, great success in the pedagogical work of the well-known and respected pianist. All the pieces, performed by the students, were characterised by great effort, purity, expression and in an appropriate tempo, which proves that the teacher did not omit any of the secrets of piano playing”.

In 1932-1938, taught at the F. Chopin Higher School of Music in Warsaw. In 1938, she returned to Częstochowa and continued her work as a teacher. She also performed, many times for charitable causes, in concerts in the city, most often with her husband, cellist Kazimierz Kopeck, and with violinists Tadeusz Smug and Jerzy Bursik. She belonged to the musical section of the Society to Promote Regional Culture and to the Częstochowa branch of the Polish Musicians Union.

During the German occupation, she continued to give piano lessons. Among the students, whom she taught in her apartment at ul. Kilińskiego 25, was Krzysztof Trzciński Komeda, who was deported with his parents from Poznań. She also taught Francine de Hagen who, after the war, was one of the greatest Belgian pianists.

In 1941, forced by the occupiers, Kopecka moved into the ghetto. However, she continued to teach and took part in concerts organised, in the ghetto, by the young musician → Jakub Weisskopf. She was taken away during the deportation of the Jews from the ghetto (September-October 1942). She perished in the Treblinka extermination camp.

Kopecka married twice – in 1907 to Kopel Mitelman and, later, to Kazimierz Kopecki, a Czech cellist. She had no children.

Błaszczyk, *Żydzi w kulturze muzycznej*, p. 140 (biography); Fater, *Muzyka żydowska*, p. 275 (biogram). – L. Jelonek, *Z dziejów życia muzycznego w Częstochowie*, Częstochowa 1995, pp. 47, 48; Malko, *Życie muzyczne*, pp. 80, 185–187, 235, 252–254, 315, 320, 350. – “Express Częstochowski” 1929, No. 76, p. 2, 1930, No. 50, p. 4, No. 68, p. 3; “Głos Wolności” 1923, No. 15, p. 3; “Goniec Częstochowski” 1908, No. 168, p. 2, 1921, No. 116, p. 3; 1929, No. 225, p. 3; “Kurier Częstochowski” 1921, No. 20, p. 3; “Ostatnie Wiadomości Częstochowskie” 1934, No. 171, p. 6; – “Ziemia Częstochowska” 1967, vols. VI/VII (W. Tyras), p. 152. – APCz, unit 58, birth record No. 137/1885; USC Częstochowa, death record No. 1236/1947. – Materials (including a photograph) in ODDC collections.

Juliusz Sętowski