

# JELGAVA AS A CONCERT VENUE IN THE 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY: MUSICIANS AND REPERTOIRE

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## Summary

Until now, the historiography of Jelgava has been more extensively focused on the history of the Duchy of Courland and Semigallia, invariably as a residence of Baroque architecture and sculpture, later also as a bearer of Classical cultural heritage, an ancient theatre town where many well-known plays were staged and performed, the history of the Latvian theatre additionally brought into this field of performances. But, what can we highlight when we talk about Jelgava (in German – *Mitau*) as a concert venue in the 19th century? Already Richard Wagner, Kapellmeister of the Riga City Theatre, spoke briefly but positively about the Jelgava Theatre (*Theater zu Mitau*) in his memories. Wagner's opera *The Flying Dutchman* (*Der fliegende Holländer*) was performed here as early as 1843, Ferenc Liszt, Anton Rubinstein and Hans von Bülow gave concerts in Jelgava, and the pianist Clara Schumann performed repeatedly in 1844 and 1864, when Jelgava residents allegedly laid a laurel wreath at her feet. During the existence of the Duchy and later, Jelgava was home to many foreign musicians who brought a high level of musical culture and thanks to whom, the city became one of the centres of musical life in the territory of Latvia.

The publication includes quotations from Carl von Holtei's (*Carl von Holtei*, 1798–1880) crime novel *Murder in Riga* (*Ein Mord in Riga*, 1855), which creatively highlights the multi ethnic environment in Jelgava in the 1830s seen by the author himself. The publication contains information about sheet music editions and their commercial offer in Jelgava in the first decades of the 19th century. The focus is also on music published in Jelgava or Mitau. There is a section on Jelgava and its theatre culture, where Wagner's episode in Jelgava (in 1838 and 1839) is also an important fact. Finally, this publication reveals how many of the city's historic buildings have fallen into disrepair or have been lost and how the traditions of concert life have irretrievably disappeared. Only the suburban mansion of Count Medem, *Villa Medem*, has actually survived, but an active concert life had taken place in the Jelgava Theatre, the Manor Club, the Craftsmen's Society House and its courtyard, where orchestras and solo artists performed in the pavilion, and, of course, in the Holy Trinity Church in Jelgava.

Although the Academic Library of the University of Latvia holds only one collection with 28 items, the study of these posters provides a panorama of the variety of foreign musicians and repertoire in Jelgava in the period from 1842 to 1908. Unfortunately, academic monographs on important personalities in Jelgava's musical life, such as Rudolph Postel (1820–1889) and Paul Koffsky (1839–1905) have so far been lacking. It is still worth continuing the research work, although, from an objective point of view, there are not large archival resources regarding Jelgava as concert venue in

19th century. The aim of this publication was to scrupulously search for source references for facts that are often mentioned in passing and reprinted, but which in the past lacked academically sound evidence and applicability in a reliable way. This study adds to the rather fragmentary information on 19th century foreign musicians who came to Riga, but many of them have also performed in Jelgava.

In the 19th century, this city of the tsarist Russian province was a very German (German-Baltic) environment, but in the second half of the century, Latvian civil society also began to emerge and the national musical awakening was unstoppable under the influence of social and political conditions. Jelgava has thus undergone dynamic changes in the 19th century and by the end of the century it was the third largest city in the territory of Latvia in terms of population.