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ON THE BIOGRAPHY AND GENEALOGY OF JULIAN FONTANA

The figure of Julian Fontana occupies an important place in the biography of Fryderyk Chopin. Peer, schoolfriend, fellow pupil of the Main School of Music, companion of many years' exile in Paris, trusted assistant, copyist, publisher of posthumous works – those are just some of the roles assumed by Fontana in Chopin's life.

The interminable discussion over Chopin's actual date of birth also relates to the biography of Fontana, for two reasons: an allusion to their ages in a letter sent by Chopin from Calder House near Edinburgh to Fontana in London on 18 August 1848, and Fontana's efforts to revise the accepted year of Chopin's birth (Fontana stated that Chopin was born in 1809). The author of this article has attempted to establish official details concerning Fontana, in the hope that they would provide arguments useful for Chopin's biography. With that aim in mind, he conducted a search for sources. That search turned up not only documented data concerning Julian and his family (parents, grandparents), but also numerous documents attesting to the Fontanas' social standing in Warsaw society. That is linked to information, disseminated since Julian Fontana's times, relating to his noble descent from famous Italian architects themselves descended from the builder of the Vatican. Research has shown, however, that the three generations of Julian's Warsaw ancestors enjoyed burgher (merchant) status, and there are no documents relating to 'architects' that attest to any kinship with the line of Chopin's friend.