

Ludomir Rozycki - Piano concerto No. 1 & Ballade Op.18 (2011)

Written by bluesever

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1. *Ballade for piano and orchestra op. 18 (1904) [10:01]* Piano Concerto No. 1 in G minor op. 43 (1918) [32:08]

2. *I. Andante.*

Allegro 3. *II. Andante con moto* 4. *III. Allegro giocoso*

Krystyna Makowska-Lawrynowicz – piano Polish Radio and TV SO in Cracow Szymon Kawalla – conductor (1) Andrzej Straszynski - conductor (2-4)

Having discovered late-romantic Rozycki through his String Quartet in D minor op.49 (1915-16) on Hyperion CDA67684 I made a mental note to try to hear more by him. The quartet is an example of glowingly confident caramel-cream late-romanticism. It was a style old-fashioned even in 1915 and embraces an idiom which is fragrant with a language associated with Korngold, Suk and Smetana - very enjoyable indeed.

This seriously short-running disc makes up for its mere 42 minutes with intensely pleasing music-making. With his Polish blood one might expect Chopin-derivative writing; not the way it turns out though the informative sleeve-note asserts otherwise. The Ballade is a fresh-faced, romantically magnificent single movement. It is generously loquacious rather than garrulous. It's a superb piece easily the equal of the two bipartite piano and orchestra pieces by Schumann - who is surely an influence here. The music is also reminiscent of the early Scriabin Piano Concerto with fleeting reminders of Liszt and Rachmaninov. The piece ends with feminine modesty rather than torrid machismo.

The Piano Concerto No. 1 is in three movements. It strolls out unassertively with less of Schumann about it but more of a sort of Rachmaninov pastel effect. Things soon intensify and most of the movement is radiant with rhetoric and turbulent romance. Lisztian storm-cells groan alongside shades of grandeur inspired by Tchaikovsky. The movement ends in trilling Delian pastoralism. The second movement muses on repose and on the tempests of the first

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movement. The finale is heady material given the impression of having been written in dazzling upland sunshine with all the confidence of the Tchaikovsky piano concertos engaged. There is even one moment that sounds very much like a figure from Tchaikovsky's Fifth. At the end the pummelling streams of notes and Rachmaninovian splendour give way to calm for a brief moment before the music skips back to dancing exhilaration and heroic magnificence. If the very last page sounds as if the composer chose to end from a conventional glossary of perorations the 'lapse' is brief and forgivable.

Although shown as No. 1 this seems to be Rozycki's only piano concerto. It's one of those occasions I would like to be proved wrong. I suspect you will want to track down other Rozycki works after hearing this. Acte Préalable have the Piano Quintet on AP0253 and not to forget that Hyperion disc.

The pianist throughout is Krystyna Makowska-Lawrynowicz. She is a most impressive artist who when she recorded these works had them well under her fingers having first performed the concerto in 1968. Her photographs fondly grace pages 2 and 20 of the essentially informative booklet. The essay and notes are by Marcin Zyglinski and they are adeptly translated by Adam Zbyszewski.

Frankly however I would have just as happily revelled in these musical delights without a single word of context or even a completely inept translation.

I liked this music a great deal and hope that there will be much more Rozycki. --Rob Barnett,
musicweb-international.com/classrev

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