

## Ludomir Rozycki: Piano Concertos – Ballade (2016)

Written by bluesever

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1. *Ballade in G major Op 18* [10'35] Piano Concerto No 1 in G minor Op 43 [31'42]  
2. *Andante – Allegro* [15'26] 3. *Andante con moto* [6'31] 4. *Allegro giocoso* [9'45]  
Piano Concerto No 2 [20'52]  
5. *Moderato in tempo* [13'30] 6. *Allegro giocoso* [7'22]  
Jonathan Plowright (piano) BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra Łukasz Borowicz (conductor)

The first thing to say (because it is the first thing you will notice when you play this disc) is that this is an outstanding recording of a piano and orchestra. The soloist is ideally placed in the sound picture, with the City Halls in Glasgow providing a clean, crisp acoustic allowing every detail to emerge with character and clarity. Hats off to David Hinitt (engineer) and Jeremy Hayes (producer). Even more impressive is the partnership between soloist and conductor. For the second time in this series, Jonathan Plowright and Łukasz Borowicz are like alchemists in the way they can raise first-class second-rate music to another level, a couple of fiercely combative squash players at times, two firm friends reminiscing on a long country walk at others. Borowicz's control of his Scottish players is quite masterly, and Plowright should be paid in bags of gold to reveal how he produces such a rich, singing tone throughout the enormous dynamic range he conjures up, from thunderous roar to mere whisper.

As to Vol 67 itself, I have now listened to it straight through several times with increasing enjoyment. I do think this is one of the more worthwhile discoveries of Hyperion's Romantic Piano Concerto series, certainly up there with the Stojowski concertos, for instance (Vol 28, 6/02), which, as it happens, also features Plowright.

Ludomir Różycki (1883-1953), little known outside his native Poland where he spent most of his career, was a pupil of Zygmunt Noskowski and Engelbert Humperdinck. All three works—the

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Ballade (1906) and the Piano Concertos Nos 1 (1918) and 2 (c1943)—have dangerously highly calorific helpings of gorgeously spun Romantic themes set against a richly orchestrated backdrop and pages of bravura piano-writing, in short epitomising what most of us think of as a Romantic piano concerto. Among many memorable highlights are the Ballade (10'35") with its apt but unexpected ending, the first movement of the Second Concerto (written in war-torn Poland) and its defiant, life-affirming finale. Reassuring, as comfortable as Sunday night on the telly—only a hair-shirt cynic could fail to enjoy Różycki. --- Jeremy Nicholas, Gramophone

As contemporaries in turn-of-the century Warsaw, Ludomir Różycki and Karol Symanowski shared a composition teacher and became fellow founders of the Young Poland in Music movement. But their careers diverged, and though Różycki (younger by a year, born in 1883) wrote prolifically and successfully in many genres, his star waned.

Szymanowski died before the war but Różycki lived until 1953, by which time Poland and Polish music had radically changed. This welcome disc of his piano and orchestra works traces a gradual stylistic evolution.

The Ballade in G dates from 1904, even before Różycki went to Berlin for studies with Humperdinck, and is an attractive piece full of broad melodies. Completed in 1918, the year of Poland's independence, the Concerto No.1 opens introspectively yet pianistic virtuosity soon wins out not least in the tarantella-like finale. More compact, the two-movement Piano Concerto No.2 has some brittleness reflecting the time of composition (1941-2) but heady ideas emerge in (following time-honoured Polish concerto tradition) the Krakowiak finale. Both the pianist Jonathan Plowright and conductor Łukasz Borowicz are champions of neglected Polish music, and this disc's place in Hyperion's Romantic Piano Concerto series makes it self-recommending. --- John Allison, BBC Music Magazine

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Ludomir Różycki należy do kategorii tych kompozytorów polskich, o których wspomina się we wszystkich niemal opracowaniach dotyczących historii naszej muzyki, podkreśla się znaczenie ich obfitego dorobku, ale w praktyce w zasadzie się ich dzieł nie wykonuje. Dlaczego? To pytanie powraca jak bumerang, kiedy myślimy o ogromnej większości polskiej muzycznej spuścizny. --- merlin.pl

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