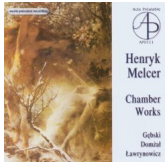


Henryk Melcer - Complete Chamber Works (2006)

Written by bluesever
Sunday, 21 July 2013 16:08 -

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1. Sonata for violin and piano in G major, I Allegretto 2. Sonata for violin and piano in G major, II Scherzo, Presto con brio 3. Sonata for violin and piano in G major, III Andante cantabile 4. Sonata for violin and piano in G major, IV Allegro gioioso 5. Dumka for violin and piano 6. Trio for piano, violin and cello in G minor Op. 2, I Moderato 7. Trio for piano, violin and cello in G minor Op. 2, II Andante con moto 8. Trio for piano, violin and cello in G minor Op. 2, III Vivace 9. Trio for piano, violin and cello in G minor Op. 2, IV Allegro con fuoco Warsaw Trio: Andrzej Gebski (violin) Jaroslaw Domzal (cello) Joanna Lawrynowicz (piano)

Henryk Melcer was born near Warsaw in 1869. He was a highly talented pianist who won competitions and toured extensively, eventually studying with Leschetizky. As a result of the renown generated by his playing he accepted a pedagogic position in Helsinki before, as the new century dawned, he moved to Lvov, firstly as pianist and thereafter as a conductor. A Viennese interlude (at the Meisterschule – Melcer was an inveterate traveller) was followed by return to Warsaw and a gradual ascent of the professorial ladder until he became director of the Conservatory. He and the entire teaching team resigned in 1926 protesting at political interference and into this void came Szymanowski to take Melcer's place. He retained his piano professorship however but died in 1928 during a lesson.

Whilst piano music was clearly an important facet of his compositional life Melcer also turned his hand to chamber music. In this enterprising disc we have three world premieres and two big works. The 1907 Violin Sonata is steeped in cleverly integrated Polish dance rhythms. The Oberek galvanises the first movement and the folksy scherzo is flavoursome. Pure lyricism is the Adagio's creed, a lied, increasingly passionate and embracing some fulsome double-stopping. The finale is frolicsome and clean limbed. The ethos here is strongly influenced by Grieg – it's the Polish equivalent of the Second and Third sonatas rolled together, though without the immediacy of ideas or the mastery of form and texture. Little of Brahms, maybe some sense of Franco-Belgian cyclical form – Franck in other words, though the predominant influence is Grieg.

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The trio is a much earlier work – his Op.2 in fact – written when Melcer was in his early to mid twenties. It's a big, solid work and Brahmsian. It builds up a strong late-Romantic steam though Melcer tends to rely on repeated figures too much. This is a particular fault of the slow movement, which may be finely lyrical, indeed wistful in places, but is overlong. The most engaging of the four movements is the scherzo, a real rustic affair with a gallant feel to it as well, and thoroughly engaging, taking the trio back to its roots. The finale has terpsichorean twists a-plenty.

There's the bonus of a Dumka for violin and piano, which turns out to be little more than a paraphrase of an influential song by Stanislaw Moniuszko.

The Warsaw Trio play well. They're canny enough not to underplay the more passionate outpourings of the Trio and the duo of Andrzej Gębski and Joanna Ławrynowicz do well by the folksiness of the sonata. Very reasonable recording quality and some helpful notes completes the package. If you're keen to find how far Grieg's influence spread into continental Europe try the sonata first. ---Jonathan Woolf, musicweb-international.com

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