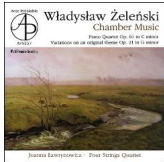


Wladyslaw Zelenski: Piano Quartet – Variations (2011)

Written by bluesever

Friday, 24 February 2017 16:37 -

Władysław Żeleński: Piano Quartet – Variations (2011)



Piano Quartet Op. 61 in C minor 1. *Allegro Con Brio* 2. *Romanza: Andante Sostenuto* 3. *Intermezzo: Allegretto* 4. *Finale: Allegro Appassionato* 5. *Variations on an original theme Op. 21 in G minor*

Ławrynowicz Joanna, piano Four Strings Quartet: Fiedukiewicz Lucyna, 1st violin Witek Grzegorz, 1Ind violin Raszewska Beata, viola Tudzierz Łukasz, cello

If one has heard much or anything about him at all, Wladyslaw Zelenski has garnered a reputation as a composer for the voice. Nevertheless this label has been actively promoting his music for chamber forces and for piano as well, so it's good to encounter his compositions once more.

Briefly, as I wrote in a previous review, he was born near Cracow and studied there and in Prague and Paris. Back in Cracow he began a distinguished pedagogic career - succeeding Moniuszko as composition teacher - before moving to an even more distinguished position in Warsaw. He was soon back in Cracow however and was eventually to become Director of the Music Conservatoire. So, a strong academic pedigree and clearly an important teacher – his most famous pupil was Zygmunt Stojowski.

The big work in this release is the Piano Quartet. In its rugged, sinewy direction it recalls, as so often in his music, the influence of Brahms. This is particularly true of the piano writing, which is strongly muscular and full of urgent power. Material is nicely contrasted in the extensive and impressive opening movement, though I hear distinct reminiscences of Brahms's First Piano Concerto. In addition to this influence, Zelenski leans strongly to stern Slavic models and this, combined with his gift for melody and very busy writing, gives the music an attractively clotted feel. In the Romanza the cello sings a Song without Words, and here one feels the impress of Zelenski's powerful vocal qualities. Noteworthy is the terse B section and also the songful

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reprise, now decorated by elegant piano figuration. Witty piano chimes animate the scherzo, whilst the sheer sweep of the composer can be gauged by the finale which, whilst rather disappointingly conventional, is still well laid out.

The companion work is the Variations on an original theme in G minor for string quartet, written significantly earlier — though neither work, unfortunately, is dated in the notes. The yearning theme is rather lovely, and we pass through eight variations, including a fugal section, a Siciliana and an Alla Polacca. Throughout, the string writing is idiomatic and effective, not least the rising unison effect produced and the quietly withdrawn way Zelenski ends the piece. It's by no means a major work but at a quarter of an hour in length an attractive one.

The major work is the Piano Quartet, extremely well performed and recorded, which once again advances the claims of this Polish composer as a valued follower of Brahms. ---Jonathan Woolf, musicweb-international.com

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