

Antoni Stolpe - Chamber music (2004)

Written by bluesever

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1. *Piano sextet in E minor* 2. *Variations for string quartet* 3. *"Scène dramatique" for cello and string quintet* 4. *Romance (duettino) for violin, cello, with piano accompaniment* Camerata Vistula: Andrzej Gębski – I violon Piotr Markowski – II violon Grzegorz Chmielewski – viola Andrzej Wróbel – cello Radosław Nur – double bass + Jerzy Maciejewski - piano (1, 4) Anna Wróbel - cello (3)

The demise of an individual who has been a worthy servant of society, be it in the sciences or the arts, always wrecks pain on the contemporary generation; however, incomparably more keenly felt is the premature death of a young person whose talent had barely glimmered, who promised the most beautiful future, and who departs the world not even half-way down his path, taking with him to the grave a waltz of great ideas and knowledge, gained through hard work. Such a loss have we suffered with the death of Antoni Stolpe, who was developing proficiently as a pianist and composer and in his last works had displayed a complete independence and a maturity of thought.

Born on 23 May 1851 in the new Aleksandryja (Puławy), where his father was a music teacher at the Institute for Young Ladies, he revealed a talent at an early age, although his cautious father did not wish to turn him into a child prodigy, deeming a slow and gradual training to be appropriate for his son. This propriety in the development of his talent served the late Antoni well, as it allowed him to seek the appropriate path free from inordinate exertion, which, given the young man's frail constitution, might have brought about an even earlier death.

Thus, he entered the Instytut muzyczny [Institute of Music] in Warsaw and worked quietly. These studies bore fruit in the Grand Prize which he received for piano and composition at a competition in 1867, where this unassuming youngster, playing with a manly energy and force, first caught the public's attention. The prize encouraged him to continue his work. Desirous of

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traveling abroad, he gave a concert in December 1868, in which, alongside his minor works, his Overture for orchestra and Piano Sextet were performed. However, the receipts proved insufficient, and he was impelled to organize a second concert in May 1869, on which occasion the highlights were his Piano Trio and his Overture No. 2 and March for orchestra.

All of the above-mentioned works impressed the artistic world with their gravity and scrupulous elaboration. Yet, Stolpe's talent was only beginning to mature, and was in a phase of yielding to the external and powerful influences of the great maestri, whom he studied with devotion. [...] In July 1869, Stolpe left for Berlin, to complete his studies there under Friedrich Kiel, who was undoubtedly the foremost teacher of composition at that time. He also presented himself to Theodore Kullak, who, on hearing him play, took a hearty interest in him and freely dispensed his advice. Within a short time, the master was so satisfied that he gave him a piano class at the Berlin Conservatory.

This is where Stolpe took on a huge amount of work, which would further undermine his already frail health. The works from this period display a break with his early method of writing and are distinguished by an increasing liberation from under the influences of the school. Kiel, seeing the great progress of his pupil, considered his training as complete, and defined the qualities of Stolpe's compositions thus: "The Germans have reason, the French possess charm: the Pole, meanwhile, combines the former and the latter in a complete whole, and that is what is most striking in the works of Stolpe". As a pianist, he was the pride of his master, Kullak, reaching a level of fluency which few musicians in Europe could match.

Having caught a cold on leaving a Wagner concert, he succumbed to an inflammation, which developed into an illness that gradually destroyed his body. His despairing father brought him back to Warsaw, believing that rest and comfort would improve his health, but all help proved ineffective. In spite of a trip to Salzbrunn and Meran, in spite of the mild climate of these places, on 7 September this year [1872] his brief and hard-working life came to an end. He left behind a family in despair and bereaved his friends, who had hoped to work together with him for art and for society... ---Zygmunt Noskowski, Tygodnik Ilustrowany

During the 19th century, romances were freely written by virtually everyone. Their composers furnished them with fanciful titles, which was often the most creative part of their work in this musical form. Yet inspired romances - the product of genuine talents - were few and far

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between. The 'Romance' by Antoni Stolpe exemplifies the fact that, for such a gifted composer, form is of little importance. He was able to infuse his romance with such inspiration that a banal, incidental 'piece' became a most outstanding work of its class. Into a typically 'romance' texture he wove elements derived from the composers of Italian operas. The subtitle Duetтино which adorns the manuscript may perhaps reflect the Italian features employed in this work. ---Andrzej Wróbel, Album Notes

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