

Stojowski, Wieniawski – Violin Concertos (2016)

Written by bluesever

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Zygmunt Stojowski (1869-1946) Violin Concerto in G minor Op 22 1 *Allegro deciso*[13'21] 2 *Andante non troppo*[7'39] 3 *Allegro giocoso*[9'26] 4 *Romanze in E flat major Op 20*[6'40]
Henryk Wieniawski (1835-1880)
5 *Fantaisie brillante sur des motifs de l'opéra Faust de Gounod Op 20*[18'48]
Bartłomiej Nizioł - violin BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra Łukasz Borowicz - conductor

Following on the label's gigantic series of forgotten Romantic piano concertos, Hyperion has experienced success with a similar violin series appealing to listeners wanting to know more of the repertory than just a few peaks. Zygmunt Stojowski (1869-1946) moved to the U.S. in 1905 and was a popular concert attraction there in the first decades of the 20th century. He had plenty of stories to tell, having known Tchaikovsky, Brahms, Delibes (one of his teachers), and other star figures of the day. Stojowski was a pianist, not a violinist, and the Violin Concerto in G minor, Op. 22, and Romanze in E flat were written for other players, not for himself. They are melodious works that bring Dvorák to mind without embedding skilled solo writing into interesting structures as Dvorák did. The best here is saved for last. Henryk Wieniawski is known most of all for his pair of concertos and his Etudes-caprices, but a 19th century audience might well have heard this *Fantaisie brillante sur des motifs de l'opéra Faust* de Gounod: not just as an operatic paraphrase, but a work that uses Gounod's opera as a springboard for an astonishing assortment of technical feats. Wieniawski's own performance in London was, according to the *Illustrated London News*, "applauded to the echo." Violinist Bartłomiej Nizioł is unfazed by the difficulties, and you can sample the slow movement of the Stojowski (track 2), with limpid melody disturbed by a few big ocean waves, to assure yourself that he is equally fluent in this very different idiom. Recommended for those interested in the world of the Romantic violin virtuoso; an audience in the years after 1900 might easily have heard a program consisting of specifically these two Polish works. ---James Manheim, AllMusic Review

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Zygmunt Stojowski has enjoyed Hyperion's patronage before, as the Piano Concertos form volume 28 of their Romantic Piano Concerto series (review) and Jonathan Plowright – the executant there - has also recorded an album of the solo piano music for the label (review). So it was high time that they reached Stojowski's Violin Concerto in G minor, which crowns Volume 20 in the corresponding Romantic Violin Concerto series.

First performed in 1900 in Paris, this is a late-Romantic concerto par excellence. The material is fluent, the general tenor of the music suggesting knowledge of, and affinity with, the Dvořák Concerto. The solo musing and pirouetting is highly addictive, not least when that pirouetting is over gently folkloric winds. Stojowski cannily introduces the occasional unaccompanied violin passage but he summons up some devastatingly beautiful writing too – listen from 10:40 for one of the concerto's high points and evidence of the composer's significant lyric gifts. The slow movement is a rich, luxuriant lied strongly steeped in the violin lineage, the harp's deft commentaries showing how perceptive is Stojowski's orchestration. Somewhat analogous to the finale of Brahms and Dvořák Violin Concertos, the finale has a folk-influenced dance. Soloist Bartłomiej Nizioł plays with ripe tonal variety and pinpoint passagework alike. He is fully attuned to the romantic ethos of this work.

As he is indeed in the Romanze, Op.20, which is dedicated to Jacques Thibaud. It was possibly intended by the composer as a kind of musical souvenir to commemorate the first meeting of composer and violinist in Warsaw. Compact – and again saturated in lyric richness, though not here voluptuousness – the slow start becomes incrementally more passionate.

Thirty-seven minutes worth of Stojowski has been augmented here by Wieniawski's Fantaisie brillante sur des motifs de l'opéra Faust de Gounod. Whilst Wieniawski is a fellow Pole - Josef Gingold once called him the violinistic equivalent of Chopin - his showpiece is a very different kettle of fish to Stojowski's works. Cast in the popular genre of nineteenth-century operatic showpiece, Nizioł plays it with panache and control. That said, he would be hard pressed to challenge Leonid Kogan in this work. The latter's 1957 live performance with Chalabala conducting offers threadbare sonics but intensity, as well as a regal sense of phrasing and of colour.

A ground-breaking premiere disc of the Concerto from Agnieszka Marucha on Acte Preamble (review) coupled both the Stojowski pieces played here with the big Violin Sonata No.2 which had the virtue of bringing together most of his major surviving violin pieces in one disc. Nizioł and the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra under Łukasz Borowicz however have produced a

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winning disc, warmly recorded and equally warmly recommended. ---Jonathan Woolf,
musicweb-international.com

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