

KAZIMIERZ SEROCKI

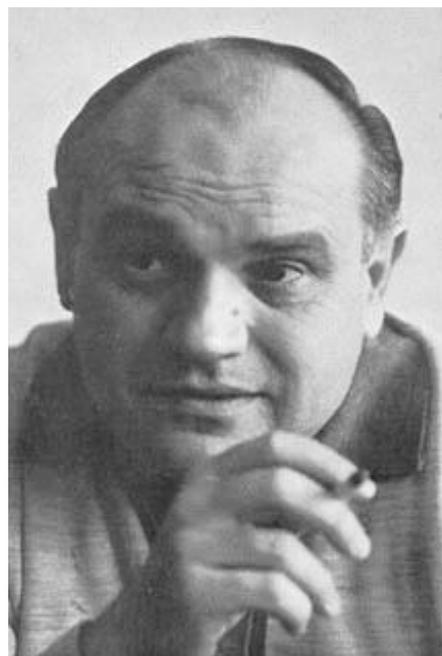
David C F Wright PhD

Kazimierz Serocki was born on 2 May 1922 in Toruń, Poland. He studied composition with Kazimierz Sikorski and piano with Stanisław Szpinalski at the State Higher School of Music in Łódź and graduated in 1946.

Sikorski was Polish, but born in Zurich on 26 June 1898, and was an award winning composer. There are four symphonies, a concerto for flute and one for trumpet, as well as concertos for clarinet and bassoon. He composed overtures, three string quartets, a sextet, choral and film music. He revised most of Chopin's works for piano and orchestra and died in 1986.

Szpinalski (1901-1957) was an outstanding Polish pianist who studied at the Warsaw Conservatory then went to Paris for three years and thereafter studied with Paderewski.

Nadia Boulanger is well known. Lazare Levy was a fine French pianist born in Belgium and who lived from 1882 to 1964. He was very influential not only as a pianist but as an organist, composer and teacher. He was a virtuoso and taught for many years at the Paris Conservatoire. His life was in the balance in World War II as he was a Jew. His many students have become household names. He died in 1964 aged 82.



As indicated, Serocki continued in Paris, studying composition with Nadia Boulanger and piano with Lazare Lévy, before graduating in 1947-1948. Between 1946 and 1951 he performed many times as a concert pianist in Poland and abroad, but for the rest of his career, he was focused exclusively on composition. Serocki's output is concentrated in two main spheres: orchestral music and vocal-instrumental pieces to Polish texts selected with fine discrimination.

Before giving himself to music he was a boxer before becoming renowned as a pianist and later took to composition. In his early days as a composer, he endured the harsh pressures in which culture was at the dictates of the state.

He is known for his three works for trombone including the Concerto of 1952 in which Serocki stays within the limits imposed by the state and some of the music is based on Polish folk tunes whereas the Lento seems to be serious and reflect the problems of living in the Stalin era. The Scherzo has aspects of irony. It is a brave work. Politics, particularly left wing politics, should not and must not interfere or govern music.

Serocki was one of the founders, along with Tadeusz Baird, of the Warsaw Autumn international contemporary music festival. Together with Tadeusz Baird and Jan Krenz, he formed the composers' group Group 49. He was vice-president of the central administration of the Polish Composers' Union from 1954 to 1955. He received a number of Polish and foreign awards, including several State Prizes, among them one in 1952 for his music to the film *Young Chopin*. He also received a prize at the UNESCO competition in 1959, for the *Sinfonietta* and the award of the Minister of Culture and Fine Arts in 1963 for the whole of his work. His *Suite of Preludes* for the piano was his first national prize. Another UNESCO prize was for his *Symphonic Frescoes* for orchestra and *Pianophonie* won the 1979 *Prix Italia*.

Much of his work is unavailable as recordings.

He had a wonderful capacity for friendship and was a very welcoming man. He eschewed all arrogance and self-importance. He was the major encouragement for younger Polish composers. He was an exceptional composer and a kind and generous man. His neglect and that of many other Polish composers is injustice.

He died in Warsaw on 9 January 1981, aged 58.

Works

Chamber music

- Suite for 4 trombones - 1953
- Sonatina for trombone and piano - 1954
- Dance for clarinet and piano - 1954
- Improvisationen für Blockflöten-Quartett - 1959
- Continuum - sextet for percussion instruments - 1966
- Swinging Music for clarinet, trombone, cello or double bass, and piano - 1970
- Fantasmagoria for piano and percussion - 1971
- Arrangements for 1-4 recorders - 1975-1976

Orchestral works and concertos

- Three Melodies from Kurpie for 6 sopranos, 6 tenors, and chamber orchestra - 1949
- Symphony No. 1 - 1952
- Symphony No. 2, "Symphony of Song" for soprano, baritone, choir, and orchestra - 1953
- Concerto for trombone and orchestra - 1953
- Sinfonietta for 2 string orchestras - 1956
- Heart of the Night, song cycle for baritone and orchestra - 1956
- Eyes of the Air, song cycle for soprano and orchestra - 1957
- Musica concertante - 1958
- Episodes for strings and 3 groups of percussion - 1959
- Segmenti - 1961
- Symphonic Frescoes - 1964
- Niobe, music to extracts from a poem by Konstanty Ildefons Gałczyński for 2 reciters (man and woman), mixed choir, and orchestra - 1966
- Forte e piano, music for two pianos and orchestra - 1967
- Poems, to words by Tadeusz Różewicz for soprano and chamber orchestra - 1969
- Dramatic Story for orchestra - 1971
- Fantasia elegiaca for organ and orchestra - 1972
- Impromptu fantasque for recorders, mandolins, guitars, percussion and piano - 1973
- Sonatina for trombone and orchestra - 1974 (arrangement of the 1954 Sonatina)
- Concerto alla cadenza per flauto a becco e orchestra - 1974
- Ad libitum five pieces for symphony orchestra - 1973-1977
- Pianophonie for piano, electronic transformation of sound and orchestra - 1976-1978

Solo instruments

- Suite of Preludes for piano - 1952
- Brownies (Krasnoludki), 7 miniatures for children for piano - 1953
- Sonata for piano - 1955
- A piacere, suggestions for piano - 1963

Voice and piano

Heart of the Night (Serce nocy), song cycle for baritone and piano (text: K.I. Gałczyński) - 1956

Eyes of the Air (Oczy powietrza), song cycle for soprano and piano (text: J. Przyboś) - 1957

4-part unaccompanied mixed choir

Songs of Midsummer Night, suite, folk text - 1954

Suite, from the Opole Region in Silesia, folk text – 1954

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