

WITOLD MALISZEWSKI

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In a series of lectures given to knowledgeable musicians and music lovers I announced that I was going to talk about Witold Maliszewski.

The group looked at each other, shook their heads and raised their eyebrows and said, “WHO?”.

I was surprised at their attitude and ignorance of such an important composer.

He was born on 20 July 1873 at Mohyliv-Podeskyi, then part of the Russian Empire but is now in the Ukraine and so he was a Polish composer.

He studied at the St Petersburg Conservatory under Rimsky Korsakov and may have had some lessons with Glazunov. He became a member of the Belyayev Circle.

Maliszewski was the founder and first rector of the Odessa Conservatory in 1913 which produced such students as David Oistrakh and Emil Gilels.



Because of the grave threat of the Bolsheviks, Witold Maliszewski emigrated to Poland in 1921 and, from 1925 to 1927 taught at the Chopin School and in 1927 was the Chairman of the First International Chopin Competition. He was also director of the Warsaw Music Society.

He was a superior musician, a very gifted composer and a wise administrator.

From 1931 to 1934 he was Director of the Music department for the Polish Ministry of Education and, from 1931 until his death he was a professor at the Warsaw Conservatory.

Among his pupils were Lutoslawski and Woytowicz.

He died at Zalesie in Poland on 18 July 1939.

In the Soviet Union his name was prohibited. As with Roslavets, he was denounced. In 1950 the Odessa Conservatory was renamed after Antonia Nezhdanov who had nothing to do with the Conservatory.

His works include

Ballet: Borula

Syrene: ballet opera Op 24

Symphony no 1 in G minor Op 8

Joyful Overture in D Op 11

Symphony no 2 in A Op 12

Symphony no 3 in C minor Op 14

Symphony no 4 in D (1925)

Symphony no 5

Fantasia Kujawski for piano and orchestra (1928)

Piano Concerto in B flat minor Op 29 (1938)
Violin Sonata Op 1
String quartet no 1 Op 2
String Quartet no 2 in C Op 6
String Quartet no 3 in E flat Op 15
Prelude and fugue fantastique in B flat minor for piano Op 16
Requiem
Missa Pontifical

The Sonata for violin and piano Op 1 is a very fine work and the writing for the violin is exemplary. The work was published by Belyayev in Leipzig in 1902. There are three movements: Allegro cantabile, Adagio molto and Tema con variazioni. The third variation is a Romance in E flat and the fourth has some amazing violin writing, the fifth has a strange title namely allegro grave, the sixth is a berceuse and the final variation is entitled Carnival which increases in speed.

The String Quartet no 1, Op 2 is sometimes wrongly said to be in F but it is in D minor. The opening Moderato has several key changes in its 19 pages. The scherzo is rooted in B flat and has a presto coda. The andante non troppo is in D minor as is the finale which is an allegro.

There are many impressive moments in the Symphony no 1 in G minor Op 8 which is dedicated to Glazunov. The opening Allegro sostenuto is occasionally leisurely but the andante is very strong and satisfying; the Scherzo is brilliant and inspiring and the finale Allegro grazioso has memorable material

The Joyful Overture Op 11 is joyful but not ecstatic. It is an accomplished work for full orchestra. It is marked Allegro molto, resuelto e giocoso with a maestoso ending which accelerates into a presto.

The Symphony no 2 is dedicated to his wife and is in four movements: Moderato - allegro grazioso, Andante espressivo in D, Scherzo, allegro vivo in F and Allegro con fuoco in A.

The prelude and fugue fantastique for piano Op 16 was published in 1913. It is a towering masterpiece of extreme difficulty and is utterly convincing as is his Piano Concerto Op 27 which is strong, impressive with stunning piano writing, soaring strings, glorious melodies enviable coordination and integration and simply brilliant. It is often grand but never pompous. It is never dull but rich and strong and amazingly original and different.

(PDF of [Prelude and Fugue Fantastique, op 16](#))

To conclude this brief look at his music the String Quartet no3 is a very fine three movement work with an excellent and simply glorious slow movement.

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