

as a critical reference point, she surveys the dramatic effectiveness (or ineffectiveness, in some cases) of Piave's versification choices, the use of traditional closed-scene forms, and Verdi's economy of thematic presentation and variation. While she does not introduce any particularly new argument within the essay, she certainly provides readers a wide tool kit of narrative, textual, formal, and thematic details to latch on to while listening. John Comber's subsequent English translation of Stepien-Kutera's work is effective, but there are a few slightly clumsy syntactical choices and a handful of typesetting errors, particularly with spacing and italicization, that are somewhat distracting to the reader. The libretto is then included, translated from Italian into Polish by Agnieszka Gołebiewska and into English by Comber, before the booklet concludes with biographies of each of the principals, Biondi, Europa Galante, the Podlasie Opera and Philharmonic Choir, and Bielecka.

While *Il corsaro* certainly has its fair share of traditional scenes and tropes, the work stands as a testing ground to articulate both melodramatic and more introspective sensibilities within Verdi's middle-period style. As Julian Budden aptly remarked, 'beneath the often conventional surface of *Il corsaro* the process of refinement is ceaselessly at work'.⁹ In and of itself, this release offers ample opportunity to reflect critically upon the value of historical practices, not only with the period instruments of Europa Galante, but some of the perhaps bolder melodramatic choices made by some of the principal singers. For us contemporary listeners, it is perhaps the layers of historicism that can reveal to us the greatest novelties.

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Polish Romantic Guitar: Chopin, Bobrowicz, Horecki, Szczepanowski, Sokołowski

Mateusz Kowalski, *guitar*
 The Fryderyk Chopin Institute NIFCCD 118, 2020
 (1 CD: 79 minutes). €15.00

For many readers of *Nineteenth-Century Music Review*, the words 'Polish Romantic' are apt to evoke Fryderyk Chopin (1810–1849) and his iconic nocturnes.¹ For some, they will prompt recall of the mid-nineteenth-century operas *Halka* (1854), *Hrabina* ('The Countess'; 1860) and *Straszny dwór* ('The Haunted Manor'; 1865) of Stanisław

⁹ Budden, *Verdi*, 209.

¹ I thank Bennett Zon, General Editor of *Nineteenth-Century Music Review*, for editing this CD review. I also thank Heather de Savage for reading an earlier draft and offering suggestions regarding its improvement.

Moniuszko (1819–1872). And for a few, the names of pianist/composers Maria Szymanowska (1789–1831), Theodor Leschetizky (1830–1915) and Ignacy Jan Paderewski (1860–1941), or that of violinist/composer Henryk Wieniawski (1835–1880), could come to mind. But what would ‘Polish Romantic Guitar’ elicit?

Given that the nineteenth-century guitar repertoire was and is dominated by the music of Italians Fernando Carulli (1770–1847), Mauro Giuliani (1781–1829) and Matteo Carcassi (1792–1853), as well as the music of Spaniards Fernando Sor (1778–1839), Dionisio Aguado (1789–1849) and Francisco Tárrega (1852–1909), all noted performers, one might guess that the instrument lacked appeal for Polish composers. And while the guitar was warmly welcomed in nineteenth-century London, Paris and Vienna, perhaps appreciative audiences didn’t coalesce in Polish lands. Of course, since the 20-year-old Chopin left Warsaw a month before the November Rising of 1830 and never returned during his lifetime, it may seem plausible that his homeland became culturally isolated, as well as politically suppressed, during the long nineteenth century.

Yet none of these assumptions proves true. Indeed, the engaging music on *Polish Romantic Guitar* reveals that a creative community within central Europe produced a rich repertoire for the six-string instrument. Drawing upon Italian and Spanish influences and fusing them with ethnic elements and regional resources, nineteenth-century Polish guitar composers were energized by the spirit of a nation divided against its will.²

Mateusz Kowalski, a graduate of the Fryderyk Chopin University of Music in Warsaw, revives, reifies and shares that artistic efflorescence.³ Bringing solid technique, thoughtful interpretation and international experience to *Polish Romantic Guitar*, Kowalski emerges as an effective advocate of Polish contributions to nineteenth-century guitar literature.⁴ And as the corresponding repertoire is surprisingly large, a champion is needed.

Born in 1995, Kowalski seems primed for this task, prepared to portray Polish guitar music in the context of the traditional literature of the guitar, and ready to perform it around the world. His website presents video performances of musical selections by Heinrich Biber (1644–1704) to Štěpán Rak (b. 1945) – whose one-handed opening must be seen to be believed! – plus a rendition of the first track

² During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the territory corresponding to contemporary Poland was partitioned several times among European powers. For instance, after the Congress of Vienna in 1815, the western city of Poznań was controlled by the Kingdom of Prussia and renamed Posen. Kraków, in the southwest, was influenced by the Habsburgs of Austria. Warsaw, toward the east, was governed by Russia. After the November Uprising, also known as the Polish–Russian War of 1830–1831, Congress Poland, as the Russian-ruled region was known, lost what little autonomy it had and effectively became a province of the Russian Empire. For an overview of this era, see Jerzy Lukowski and Hubert Zawadzki, *A Concise History of Poland*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

³ For more information about the Fryderyk Chopin University of Music (Uniwersytet Muzyczny Fryderyka Chopina – UMFC), see <https://chopin.edu.pl/university/about-the-umfc> (accessed 25 May 2023).

⁴ The *Polish Romantic Guitar* website, which includes an ordered track list and a biographical sketch of the guitarist, plus notes about the music and its composers, may be seen at https://publikacje.nifc.pl/en/wydawnictwa-plytowe/artukul/32_nifccd-118-chopin-bobrowicz-horecki-szczepanowski-sokolowski (accessed 25 May 2023).

on *Polish Romantic Guitar*.⁵ Kowalski's website also reveals a strong online presence, including a YouTube channel, as well as a busy career.⁶ All of this suggests Kowalski is well-suited for promoting Polish guitar music, as well as the classical guitar repertoire in general, particularly before youthful audiences.⁷

His album, which comes in a CD-sized, hardbound booklet, with illuminative liner notes in both Polish and English by fellow guitarist Krzysztof Komarnicki, was produced by The Fryderyk Chopin Institute in Warsaw.⁸ In turn, the Chopin Institute (NIFC), which may be best known for its administration of the International Chopin Piano Competition, operates under the auspices of the Polish Ministry of Culture and National Heritage.⁹ Recorded in the Witold Lutosławski Concert Studio of Polish Radio, the CD's sound is clear, crisp and intimate.¹⁰ For this project, the artist used a spruce guitar made in 2015 by Karl-Heinz Roemmich.¹¹ This CD, Kowalski's second release, manifests self-assurance and maturity as it makes a compelling statement about this area of the Polish aural art.¹² To profile this recording, the following discussion will forgo a sequential survey of its 16 tracks to focus on five groups of affiliated compositions.¹³

The framing tracks on this disc, both by Stanisław Szczepanowski (1811?–1877), express the essence of Polish Romanticism and the Poles' existential struggle during the nineteenth century.¹⁴ Opening the album is *Une Larme, Morceau expresif*, whose plaintive lines capture the longing characteristic of the Romantic aesthetic. Imbued with an unmistakable impression of loss, the melodies unfold with lyricism that mixes Italian, Spanish and French accents. Krzysztof Komarnicki's relates in his liner notes that the work originally was composed for cello and piano, explaining: 'The contemporary musicologist and publisher Matanya Orphee discerned guitar texture in this miniature piece

⁵ Mateusz Kowalski's website may be seen at www.mateuszkowalskiguitarist.com (accessed 25 May 2023).

⁶ More video performances and interviews are available via Kowalski's YouTube channel; see www.youtube.com/mateuszkowalskiguitarist (accessed 25 May 2023).

⁷ I am grateful to Heather de Savage for this observation.

⁸ For more information about The Fryderyk Chopin Institute (Narodowy Instytut Fryderyka Chopina – NIFC), which is separate from the Fryderyk Chopin University of Music, see <https://nifc.pl/en/> (accessed 25 May 2023).

⁹ For more information about the Polish Ministry of Culture and National Heritage (Ministerstwo Kultury i Dziedzictwa Narodowego), see <https://culture.pl/en/tag/ministry-of-culture-and-national-heritage> (accessed 25 May 2023).

¹⁰ For more information about the Witold Lutosławski Concert Studio, see www2.polskieradio.pl/studio/lutoslawski_en.aspx (accessed 25 May 2023).

¹¹ For the luthier's website, see www.roemmich-guitars.com/index.php?lang=en (accessed 20 June 2023).

¹² The artist's first release, *Mateusz Kowalski – Classical Guitarist*, on the CD Accord label (ACD 251; 2019), featured music by J.S. Bach, Francisco Tárrega, Manuel Ponce, Astor Piazzolla, Sergio Assad, Mauro Giuliani, Augustín Mangoré, and Franz Schubert. Its website may be seen at <https://cdaccord.com.pl/en/en-mateusz-kowalski-classical-guitarist/> (accessed 25 May 2023).

¹³ Streaming service delivery diminishes perception of significant relationships and comprehensive insights within compact discs. For a track list of *Polish Romantic Guitar*, see the link cited above in note 4.

¹⁴ Stanisław Szczepanowski's birth year remains uncertain; see p. 35 of the CD's liner notes.

and recreated a hypothesized guitar original' (p. 38).¹⁵ On first hearing, what will catch listeners off guard within this ternary form of nearly five minutes is its brief but determined turn toward the major mode at 1:48, which, with Kowalski's flush of exuberance, seems to suggest a short flight of wishful imagination.

Closing the album is Szczepanowski's *Introduction et Variations Brillantes sur un Air National* ('La Pologne n'est pas perdue') in E major.¹⁶ The composition's quasi-improvisatory opening section, set in common time, features quickly changing textures, offers hints of what will come and concludes with a brief cadenza to introduce the 16-bar, binary form theme, which is based on what has become the Polish national anthem.¹⁷ A folk tune in simple triple metre, rendered here with three quavers to the bar, that theme's frequent dotted subdivision of the downbeat and mid-measure accents evoke the Polish national dance of the mazurka.¹⁸ Four variations follow: the first and third, in compound duple, plus the second in simple duple, offer contrast, while the last returns the theme's simple triple, offering a metric reprise.

Szczepanowski was a widely touring guitarist in the mid-nineteenth century. Krzysztof Komarnicki tell us:

Perhaps his most important performance was a private concert given in Paris, where he improvised on the theme of 'Poland has not yet perished' at a reception for Adam Mickiewicz organized on 24 December 1840 by Eustachy Januszkiewicz. His variations on the same theme no doubt represent a record of that improvisation. The introduction points to his studies with Sor: it is very similar in idea, chord patterns and texture to the introduction from the Spanish master's famous Variations on a theme of Mozart' (p. 37).¹⁹

While the energetic final variation certainly fulfills the promise of the composition's title, its immediate predecessor, a variation marked *mineur*, which lacks the repeats that distinguish the first two variations, seems much more personal. Indeed, the third variation's shifting accents, articulations and rhythms, plus its

¹⁵ See Stanisław Szczepanowski, *Introduction et Variations Brillantes sur un Air National, Une Larme, Morceau Expressif*, for guitar, Editions Orphee (# 49402503), 2001.

¹⁶ A nineteenth-century copy of Szczepanowski's score for *Introduction et Variations Brillantes sur un Air National* is held by the International Music Score Library Project (IMSLP)/Petrucci Music Library, which may be reached via https://imslp.org/wiki/Main_Page (accessed 20 June 2023).

¹⁷ The Polish national anthem, 'Jeszcze Polska nie zginęła', which was which dates from 1797 and bears words by Józef Wybicki (1747–1822), was formally adopted in 1927.

¹⁸ The Polish equivalent of 'mazurka' is 'mazurek', which refers to the region of Mazovia, whose largest city is Warsaw.

¹⁹ Adam Mickiewicz (1798–1855), a poet and patriot, and Eustachy Januszkiewicz (1805–1874), an author and publisher, were Polish exiles living in Paris. For more on Mickiewicz, who was a friend of Chopin, see Roman Koropeckyj, *Adam Mickiewicz: The Life of a Romantic* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008); Adam Mickiewicz, *Pan Tadeusz: The Last Foray in Lithuania*, trans. Bill Johnston (New York: Archipelago Books, 2018); Adam Mickiewicz, *Ballads and Romances*, trans. Charles S. Kraszewski, illust. Max Mendor (London: Glagoslav Publications, 2022). Sor's 'Variations on a theme of Mozart' were first published in London in 1819 and based on a theme from *Die Zauberflöte* (1791). Copies of early editions of the work held by the International Music Score Library Project (IMSLP)/Petrucci Music Library, which may be reached via https://imslp.org/wiki/Main_Page (accessed 20 June 2023).

grace notes, harmonics and ever-so-brief switch to major, are engaging and memorable, enabling exposition of the performer's subtle touch and attention to detail. Yet in retrospect, what seems most impressive about this unabashedly nationalistic composition is its unpretentiously extroverted nature. Bearing a French title and published in London by Johanning & Co., Szczepanowski's *Introduction et Variations Brillantes sur un Air National* seems intended to bear an aspirational message to receptive European ears from an artist identified on the cover of the score as an 'Officier de la dernière armée Polonoise'. Kowalski revives that patriotic pride from nearly two centuries ago with a most persuasive performance.

Eight of Chopin's mazurkas, arranged for guitar by Jan Nepomucen Bobrowicz (1805–1881), who studied with Mauro Giuliani in Vienna, represent the spiritual core of *Polish Romantic Guitar*. These include adaptations of Chopin's Op. 6 Nos. 1–4 and Op. 7, Nos. 1–4, for guitar, which were released in Leipzig by Friedrich Kistner, the first publisher of Chopin's original piano versions of these stylized dances.²⁰ Of course, downward transposition distinguishes these settings, given the guitar's tessitura, but other audible changes occur. For instance, most of these transcriptions feature new tonalities (e.g., Op. 6 No. 1), a few elevate foregrounded inner voices to become upper voices (e.g., Op. 6 No. 2), all require textural compression and thinning (e.g., Op. 6 No. 3) and, in many, articulative changes compensate for absent piano pedal effects (e.g., Op. 6 No. 4). Obviously, Bobrowicz has reimagined Chopin's music within a different medium. However, listeners familiar with the intimacy of these mazurkas when performed on one of Chopin's beloved Pleyel pianos, or those who appreciate the registral differentiation of their textural components when they are played on an Érard, will not be disappointed. Subtle detailing, firm counterpoint, energetic rhythm and warm resonance come through with admirable clarity and presence in Kowalski's interpretations. So does a strong sense of commitment to displaying the wider cultural implications of Chopin's music.

For instance, while his recording of Bobrowicz's arrangement of Chopin's Op. 7 No. 1 may not have a dynamic range as wide as that of the piano, Kowalski's close-captured guitar conveys the impetuous volatility of the opening six-bar phrases, expanding their playful descending gestures with rubato to gain an irresistible teasing effect. In the first episode within this five-part form, his performance of the upper melody simulates a conversational effect within its short gestures through alternating dynamic and phrasing changes, while the second episode, which features a perfect fifth drone, modal melody and the direction to perform the passage *sotto voce*, seems mock-ominous as well as entirely idiomatic to the guitar. In the second mazurka of the set, which Chopin marked 'Vivo ma non troppo' and '♩ = 160', and which opens in the minor mode, Kowalski performs the first section surprisingly slowly to achieve an introspective, almost brooding quality. But in the contrasting middle section, which initially draws upon the parallel major, his tempo is much faster, quite lively and unexpectedly care-free at times, complementing the opening through sharp emotional contrast. Bobrowicz's arrangement of Chopin's Op. 7 No. 3 features foregrounded melody in multiple registers, and the guitarist takes care to simulate distinctly different moods and even, upon occasion, separate voices. Through this, we're reminded that that Chopin's mazurkas

²⁰ A copy of Bobrowicz's arrangements of these four mazurkas from Chopin's Op. 6 is held by the International Music Score Library Project (IMSLP)/Petrucci Music Library, which may be reached via https://imslp.org/wiki/Main_Page (accessed 20 June 2023).

embody the essences of both dance and song.²¹ Without question, however, the real showpiece of this set (and this reviewer's favourite) is the last mazurka, Op. 7 No. 4. A mix of energy, humour, reflection and optimism, it shows why Chopin's dances held such broad appeal throughout Europe during the nineteenth century, and why this one seems suited to six strings. It is music that says 'Poland'.

The nearly 23 minutes devoted to Jan Nepomucen Bobrowicz's arrangements of Chopin's mazurkas on *Polish Romantic Guitar*, plus the more than 27 minutes occupied by his own music, should signify something of his stature in the panorama of nineteenth-century guitar. Three works, including Bobrowicz's variations on a Ukrainian song, Op. 7, his variations on 'Là ci darem la mano' from Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, Op. 6, and his *Distraction: Rondeau brilliant et facile*, Op. 17, all of which were published with French titles in Leipzig by Breitkopf & Härtel, suggest that he stands with the best of the nineteenth century.

Theme and variation sets were a common and apparently obligatory genre among the leading nineteenth-century guitar composers. Enabling display of a guitarist's technical prowess, they also demonstrated the composer's power of invention, revealed awareness of prior literature and sometimes set new standards for successors. All while exercising creativity and prompting ingenuity in ways that would echo within other works. Yet variation sets also engaged listeners' imaginations, cultivated their perceptual skills and unfolded a form of aural drama that moved from the simple and familiar to the complex and evolved. Stanisław Szczepanowski's *Introduction et Variations Brillantes sur un Air National*, discussed earlier in this review, accomplishes all of these in fine form. Bobrowicz's variation sets do so with authority.

Bobrowicz's variations on a Ukrainian song, Op. 7, a nearly ten-minute essay comprised of a theme, six variations and a coda, offers a good introduction to the guitarist/composer's own art.²² The work, whose Polish title is 'Wariacje na temat piosenki ukraińskiej op. 7', begins with a 16-bar subject, reported in the liner notes to be 'essentially a mazurka' that was based on 'a soldiers' camp song from Zadwórz, near Lviv, a village inhabited by Poles at that time' (p. 42). Set in A minor, with three quavers to the bar, the serious-sounding rounded binary theme features dotted rhythms, mid-bar agogic accents and occasional graces, plus a tiny amount of ornamental chromaticism within a brief turn to the relative major at the start of the second half to communicate a hint of playfulness. Kowalski's reading of the theme incorporates quite a lot of rubato, which sometimes obscures the triple metre, and it often underemphasizes the lowest voice, whose many open-string notes could provide more ambient resonance. However, these interpretive choices, which impart ambiguity, may have been strategic: the first variation that follows is, in contrast, much steadier and more clearly in simple triple, and well as fuller and more resonant. Five more variations follow, also in simple triple, becoming increasingly athletic, active and arpeggiated, though motivic elements from the theme remain readily recognized. Kowalski takes advantage of the required repeats, reinterpreting returns with subtle changes in phrasing, emphasis

²¹ Pauline Viardot (1821–1910) recognized the vocal quality embodied within this music, and in 1864, created vocal arrangements of 12 of Chopin's mazurkas using poetic texts by Louis Pomey (1835–1901). Her setting of Chopin's Op. 7 No. 3 (VWV 4029), was called 'Faible cœur!'.

²² A copy of Bobrowicz's variations on a Ukrainian song is held by the International Music Score Library Project (IMSLP)/Petrucci Music Library, which may be reached via https://imslp.org/wiki/Main_Page (accessed 20 June 2023).

and timbre that seem spontaneous and thus hold attention. A 16-bar Andante in simple duple metre, which serves as a coda to the set, begins quietly, suggesting an understated ending. However, obstinate offbeat accents destabilize that impression, introducing fluctuating tempi and dynamics until the final cadence, played *Vivace* and *ff*, abruptly adds hearty humour at the end.

Fryderyk Chopin's composition for piano and orchestra, Variations on 'Là ci darem la mano', Op. 2 (1827), which is based on the famous duet between Don Giovanni and Zerlina in the first act of Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, premiered in Vienna in 1829 with the composer at the keyboard, and was published there the following year by Haslinger.²³ Jan Nepomucen Bobrowicz's 'Wariacje na temat "Là ci darem la mano" z opery *Don Giovanni* W.A. Mozarta' op. 6', based on the same theme, predates Chopin's music by a year. Krzysztof Komarnicki indicates within his liner notes that the guitarist's variations were 'first published by Pillier of Lviv in 1826' and ventures that Chopin may have heard and even been inspired by the work (p. 41).²⁴ While Komarnicki's speculation calls for supportive evidence, it is clear that Bobrowicz's 'Là ci darem la mano' variations require virtuosity that musicians like Chopin would admire, testifying to a tremendous technique. Kowalski's insightful performance on from *Polish Romantic Guitar* more than meets their diverse demands.

Bobrowicz's monumental Op. 6 is comprised of Mozart's famous theme, expressed within a 16-bar, rounded binary form, followed by six increasingly brilliant variations, the last of which evolves into a bravura coda. What will impress all listeners is the wide pitch range sustained through most of this work, a registral expanse of two and often three-plus octaves. Kowalski's idiosyncratic dynamic differentiation of the foreground, middleground and background components, as well as his wide palette of timbral variations – achieved via articulation changes (nail vs flesh, rest stroke vs free stroke) and location changes (bridge vs fingerboard vs in between) – confers textural transparency on this music that is readily audible and continuously engaging. His artistry is particularly revealed through interpretive differentiation during repeated sections. As in Szczepanowski's *Introduction et Variations Brillantes sur un Air National*, the minor-mode variation of Bobrowicz's set seems the most intimate and intriguing, and it concludes with a cadenza that moves the mood from intense introversion to extreme extroversion. After 11 minutes, the final chord of Op. 6 leaves listeners exhilarated.

Bobrowicz's *Distraction: Rondeau brilliant et facile*, Op. 17, set in A major, portrays its composer as a psychologist.²⁵ A seven-part rondo with coda that runs to over six minutes, its refrains are distinguished by light humour – teasingly interpreted by Mateusz Kowalski using tempo changes, brief pauses, surprising dynamics, timbral changes and extravagant slides. Its episodes nimbly move through numerous keys, textures, rhythms and registers, as well as many moods – mock-serious,

²³ Readers of *Nineteenth-Century Music Review* will recall that Chopin's Op. 2 elicited Robert Schumann's oft-repeated remark (expressed in print by Schumann's character Eusebius) 'Hut ab, ihr Herrn, ein Genie' ['Hats off, gentlemen, a genius']. Robert Schumann, 'Ein Opus II', *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* 33/49 (7 December 1831): 49.

²⁴ A copy of Bobrowicz's variations on Mozart's 'Là ci darem la mano' is held by the International Music Score Library Project (IMSLP)/Petrucci Music Library, which may be reached via https://imslp.org/wiki/Main_Page (accessed 20 June 2023).

²⁵ A copy of Bobrowicz's *Distraction: Rondeau brilliant et facile* is held by the International Music Score Library Project (IMSLP)/Petrucci Music Library, which may be reached via https://imslp.org/wiki/Main_Page (accessed 20 June 2023).

quasi-mysterious and care-free, as well as earnest, distant and glib. Of course, the work's French title represents a tip-off to this volatility. 'Distraction' implies a 'diversion', which this *rondeau* certainly represents, if one abandons oneself to the composition's caprice. And 'brilliant et facile' is an oxymoron. With respect to nineteenth-century guitar, 'brilliant' refers to virtuosic performance that emphasizes timbrally bright articulation achieved by exploiting the fingernails, and such playing is far from 'facile' – hardly easy! What Bobrowicz offers and Kowalski's provides is an opportunity for transcendence. *Distraction* can lift a listener out of current circumstances into the realm of imagination, where personal responses and contributions to the aesthetic experience create an alternate reality of levity, energy and anticipation.

Feliks Horecki (1796–1870), who was known as Felix Horetzky when he lived in England and Scotland, studied with Mauro Guiliani and taught Stanisław Szczepanowski, according to the CD's liner notes (p. 35). His *Fantasia*, Op. 40, published in London by Metzler & Co. with the inscription 'Composed and Dedicated to the Right Honorable Countess of Kintore', is a substantial yet also subtle concert work of nearly nine minutes.²⁶ Its title, which would seem to suggest a rhapsodic flight of fancy within a unique formal structure, represents something of a calculated distraction, for Horecki's *Fantasia* actually is another theme and variations composition that consists of an introduction, rounded binary theme, six variations and a long finale.²⁷ Similar in certain structural ways to the variation sets of Bobrowicz and Szczepanowski, it also offers instructive contrast.

Horecki's *Fantasia* is technically demanding though not flamboyantly virtuosic, expressive yet reserved and spirited while also refined. More specifically, it explores and exploits the guitar's potential for resonance, sonority and grace. The introduction, which features a slow tempo ('Andante sostenuto'), common time and the key of D minor, is dramatic, chromatic and dynamically fluctuant, founded on an elaborated instance of the 'lament tetrachord': D3–C3–B♭2–A2.²⁸ Immediately following is the *Fantasia*'s ingratiating theme, which features a faster tempo ('Allegretto Grazioso'), simple duple metre and the key of D major.²⁹ Distinguished by dotted rhythms, graces and ornamental chromaticism, its whimsy is sustained and even amplified through the following four variations, each faster than the previous. Kowalski's rendition of the fourth variation – which is dominated by slurred and staccato demisemiquaver scales – amazes and dazzles. The fifth brings a change of pace ('Tempo di Marcia'), a familiar metre (common time) and a new mood (genteel), yet returns the dotted rhythms, graces and ornamental chromaticism of the original theme, while the sixth reprises the demisemiquavers, now in tremolo figuration. Following this, the composition's extended Finale returns motivic elements from throughout the previous sections to

²⁶ Kintore is about 20 kilometres from Aberdeen.

²⁷ A manuscript copy of Horecki's (Horetzky's) *Fantasia*, as well as a printed copy originally published by Metzler & Co. in London, are held by the International Music Score Library, which may be reached via https://imslp.org/wiki/Main_Page (accessed 20 June 2023).

²⁸ For more on the 'lament tetrachord', see Ellen Rosand, 'The Descending Tetrachord: An Emblem of Lament', *The Musical Quarterly* 65/3 (1979): 346–59.

²⁹ Some listeners might be surprised that, in this recording, the guitarist does not repeat the first section of Horecki's theme, nor those of the *Fantasia*'s subsequent variations, as the score directs. But perhaps these choices reflected a matter of time: at a generous 79 minutes, the *Polish Romantic Guitar* album nearly exceeds the capacity of its compact disc.

offer a satisfying close. Emphasizing harmony, motivicism and drama, Feliks Horecki's *Fantasia*, along with the other variation sets on *Polish Romantic Guitar*, demonstrates how diverse instances of the genre can be. Kowalski, in turn, recognized that Horecki's sojourn in Britain surely influenced the *Fantasia's* style and carefully projected corresponding traits.

Marek Konrad Sokołowski (1818–1883) may be the least-known of the composers on this disc, but his brief character piece, *Diligènza postale* ('Postal Diligence') and his slightly longer *Etiuda D-dur* ('Study in D major') demonstrate more of the diversity of creative voices and compositional forms found within the nineteenth-century Polish guitar literature. *Diligènza postale*, which is set in a sectional structure with repetitive refrains that bear, to these ears, a slight Russian impression, features a quasi-improvisatory introduction and interludes that dwell on the dominant and emphasize half cadences to communicate, perhaps, the anticipation associated with waiting for correspondence from afar. And while one may suppose that Sokołowski's etude in D might feature technical display evocative of Chopin's monumental *Études* Op. 10 (1833) and Op. 25 (1837), as well as the *Trois nouvelles études* (1839), it presents, instead, as a slow and introspective essay that pursues lyricism in multiple registers of the guitar – not easy, given the rapid decay of guitar string sounds – and ends most delicately with a coda that glistens with ringing harmonics. In these two pieces, perhaps more than elsewhere on the album, one may hear a cosmopolitan mix of Italian, Spanish, French, Polish, Ukrainian and other influences that document and display a receptive, reflective and creative guitar culture in nineteenth-century central Europe.

For those whose grasp of 'classical guitar' proceeds primarily from the tradition established by Andrés Segovia (1893–1987), built over eight decades of touring, recording and teaching in the twentieth century, *Polish Romantic Guitar* may represent a revelation. Segovia's repertoire, rich as it was, appears to have held just a few Polish pieces, including transcriptions of Chopin's *Prelude*, Op. 28, No. 7, and Chopin's *Mazurka*, Op. 63, No. 3. Yet it is hard to imagine that the maestro remained unaware of the contributions of Szczepanowski, Bobrowicz, Horecki and Sokołowski, whose published works were circulated within Europe during the nineteenth century. Unfortunately, it seems that Segovia's vision for the guitar did not include championing them. This compact disc remediates.

Polish Romantic Guitar also attests that Fryderyk Chopin provided aesthetic inspiration and professional motivation to his contemporaries. Indeed, it suggests that Chopin's music represented a legacy of creative resistance to which they could add. However, it also demonstrates that these composers' works reflect a spirit of nationalism that would not be stifled nor remain unreceptive to external influences from western Europe. Like guitarist Mateusz Kowalski, the nineteenth-century Polish composers heard here distinguish themselves via their advocacy. Given recent and current circumstances, their messages seem timeless and transcendent.

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