



HOMAGE TO PADEREWSKI

Piano works by Bartók, Benjamin, Blumenfeld, Britten, Castelnuovo-Tedesco, Chaminade, Chanler, Goosens, Hammond, Martinů, Nin-Culmell etc

Jonathan Plowright (piano)
Hyperion CDA 67903 74:39 mins

BBC Music Direct £12.99

Seventy years after his death, the Polish virtuoso pianist, composer and politician Ignacy Jan Paderewski remains one of the early 20th century's most fascinating figures. He was a signatory to the Treaty of Versailles and prime minister of his newly independent country in the aftermath of World War I, even dabbling in growing Zinfandel vines and prospecting for oil (unsuccessfully) on the Californian estates he bought at the height of his musical success. At the centre of this new Hyperion recording, Jonathan Plowright revisits the memorial album of pieces published by Boosey & Hawkes in New York in 1942. They feature a diverse group of composers, ranging from Bartók to Joaquín Nin-Culmell (brother of the more famous Anaïs). Though not all the works are memorable – indeed, by comparison, some of Paderewski's own and often maligned music sounds strong – this is a fascinating document. Pieces by Martinů and Castelnuovo-Tedesco are among the gems.

The collection is framed by further works of homage, and opens with an Etude by Paderewski's elder colleague Józef Wieniawski (brother of the violin virtuoso). The most interesting and substantial item is Britten's *Mazurka elegiaca* for two pianos (in which Plowright is joined by Aaron Short). It pays tribute to Paderewski as a Chopin interpreter, stirring memories of the latter's *Mazurka*, Op. 7 No. 2. Overall more reflective than virtuosic, this disc allows Plowright to show off his superb command of texture and colour. *John Allison*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

BACKGROUND TO...

Ignacy Jan Paderewski (1860-1941)



In his day, the Polish-born pianist and politician was a cult figure, known as a gifted

improviser and an imaginative performer. Essentially self-taught, he first made a splash in Paris after lessons in Vienna, going on to tour Europe and America. Nerves put his concert career on hold around 1909, and he became more involved in politics. Appointed prime minister of Poland, he went to the Paris Peace Conference, but soon resigned. For the rest of his life he juggled music and politics. He died in America in 1941.

