



I'm not stuck for interpretative ideas, but Albéniz I've always found incredibly difficult. Debussy and Ravel I'm not too happy with, yet I love playing Poulenc. I adore Bach – I did four recitals a few years ago mixing Bach and Schubert because they have a lot of complementary facets about them. They work very well together. I did a couple of the Bach partitas and the *Italian Concerto* and coupled them with the four last Schubert sonatas.'

He will soon make a further addition to the 'Romantic Concerto' series with two by the Polish pianist and composer Henryk Melcer (1869-1928): No.1 in E minor (1895) and No.2 in C minor (1898) – 'very nice, skilfully written, good tunes and actually very effective, humdinger stuff!' – followed by a disc (or two?) of the superb collection of Bach transcriptions by Walter Rummel.

More immediately, the Stojowski concertos have been succeeded by a disc of Stojowski solos (see review on p.70). The second of the Op.10 *Orientales*, which appears on this disc, was also recorded by its dedicatee Josef Hofmann. 'The Op.38 *Fantasie* is beautiful, the height of Romantic writing,' Plowright enthuses. 'It demonstrates a complete control and knowledge of the piano. The Op.39 *Aspirations*

for that, it has never been a means of writing him off as it has been with Stojowski.' The snottier critics like to dismiss Stojowski's concertos as 'high tosh'. One Polish reviewer, commenting along these lines after Plowright's performance with the Warsaw Philharmonic, opined that 'some sections sound very similar to Rachmaninoff's First Concerto', clearly unaware that Stojowski composed his First Concerto a year before Rachmaninoff composed his. Not for the first time, a critic damns a 'minor' composer by assuming he has cribbed from a 'major' composer.

Plowright is horrified at the idea of being labelled a specialist. 'I love the whole gamut of classical piano music and I couldn't bear the thought of specialising or playing in one particular style. True, there are some styles that I don't feel comfortable playing – certain types of Spanish music, mainly because of the way it's written.

are absolutely gorgeous, too. Very French. They show the influence of Louis Diémer [Stojowski's teacher] coming through. Quite exotic. Some of the harmonies are absolutely ravishing. It's just so enjoyable to play. And then, of course, you've got the big Op.42 *Theme and Variations* which has a fabulous fugue. It's as though Stojowski is just showing that he can do all this.'

After all those years of not wanting to be a pianist, Jonathan Plowright is clearly relishing the life, and equally delighted that his lifelong passion for the Poles is bearing fruit. His is no flash-in-the-pan career. Leopold Godowsky espoused this saying of Confucius: 'I am not concerned at not being known; I seek to be worthy to be known.' It's a philosophy that Plowright has surely embraced, one which many a hyped-up new young label signing would do well to ponder. ©

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Jonathan Plowright
Photo Diane Shaw