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The Artistic Profile of Aleksander Zarzycki: A Forgotten Composer of the Romantic Era

Abstract

The second half of the nineteenth century is a neglected period in the history of Polish music, in the aspects of both research and performance. Works by many composers from this period have unfortunately been forgotten. One such composer is undoubtedly Aleksander Zarzycki (1834–1895), also a teacher and piano virtuoso, the author of more than 40 opuses, including many solo songs with piano accompaniment, which have frequently been compared to the songs of Stanisław Moniuszko. Similarly as Poland's most famous song composer, Zarzycki created two songbooks that belong to the trend of egalitarian songs. He was also renowned for his short piano pieces, written in the salon style with virtuoso elements. One of his most famous works is the *Mazurka in G major*, popularised by the Spanish virtuoso violinist Pablo Sarasate. Also of note is his *Piano Concerto in A-flat major Op. 17*, drawing on Fryderyk Chopin's *Piano Concerto in A minor* and Józef Wieniawski's *Concerto in G minor*. Zarzycki's works are

characteristic of his era, and contain elements of folklore, national style, virtuosity, and the so-called 'Romantic mood'.

Keywords

Aleksander Zarzycki, Polish music of the nineteenth century, piano works, solo songs

The second half of the nineteenth century was undoubtedly a difficult time in the territory of former Poland. In 1795, after the Third Partition, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth had ceased to exist, undergoing a political and cultural collapse, which intensified after the defeat of two uprisings – one that broke out in November 1830 and another in January 1863. No wonder, then, that the development of musical culture in Poland was significantly hindered at that time, and many works from that period have not survived to our day, as they were often lost due to the ravages of war. It should also be pointed out that the possibilities for the development of both art and science were different in the territory of each partition. Artists had the greatest degree of autonomy under the Austrian rule (in Galicia), slightly smaller in the lands annexed by Prussia, and the smallest – under the Russian authority.

As Irena Poniatowska rightly observes in *Wstęp do Historii Muzyki Polskiej. Romantyzm 1850–1901*¹ [*Introduction to the History of Polish Music. Romanticism 1850–1901*], Polish music written in the second half of the nineteenth century has largely been neglected by both performers and researchers. Apart from the aforementioned difficult political and cultural situation in the former Poland, the author points to the poor availability of sheet music, or rather of its printed editions, as a problem which results in the inability to perform these works and undertake research on a wide scale. Despite the passage of ten years since the publication of Poniatowska's book, the musicologist's comments remain relevant. The musical output of the late Romantic composers still seems to be insufficiently studied. This problem concerns both well-known Polish composers such as Zygmunt Noskowski and Władysław Żeleński, not all of whose works have been fully researched

¹ I. Poniatowska, *Historia Muzyki Polskiej*, 5. *Romantyzm*, II A. *Twórczość muzyczna w drugiej połowie XIX wieku, 1850–1900* (2010), 57.

or even published at all, and less recognised artists, whose music has in many cases not been the subject of scholarly analyses even to the smallest extent. One such forgotten Polish composer active in the second half of the nineteenth century is undoubtedly Aleksander Zarzycki. He gained fame mainly as the author of solo songs with piano accompaniment, piano miniatures, and virtuoso violin music. It is an oeuvre which, on the one hand, can easily be dismissed as epigonic (as imitation of Moniuszko or Chopin). On the other hand, though, it does not lack individual qualities so characteristic of the Romantic era. Zarzycki's output is undeniably an important item in the treasury of Polish nineteenth-century musical culture.

That Aleksander Zarzycki's life and work have largely fallen into oblivion is evident from the still insufficient number of studies dedicated to his music. One exception is an MA thesis presented in 2018, devoted to Zarzycki's selected solo songs with piano accompaniment.² There are also mentions of his oeuvre in various encyclopaedias, including *Encyklopedia muzyczna PWM*³ [*PWM Edition's Music Encyclopaedia*], as well as in publications on late Romantic Polish music. Many of the composer's works still remain only in manuscript form and are frequently even omitted from lists of his compositions.⁴ Nevertheless, the last decade has evidently brought growing interest in Zarzycki's oeuvre, for instance in the field of publishing.⁵ His works are also experiencing a renaissance in performers' repertoires. A significant proportion of them have been listed among compositions that can be selected for performance in the first and second stages of the Stanisław Moniuszko International Competition of Polish Music in Rzeszów, both in the category of pianists and chamber ensembles.⁶

² K. Popielska, 'Pieśni solowe z fortepianem Aleksandra Zarzyckiego do słów Heinricha Heinego i Adama Asnyka w kontekście tradycji solowej pieśni romantycznej', MA thesis (2018).

³ B. Chmara-Żaczekiewicz, 'Aleksander Zarzycki', in E. Dziębowska, ed., *Encyklopedia muzyczna PWM*, 12, (2012).

⁴ Individual works by Zarzycki that have never been published can be found, among others, in the collection of the Jagiellonian Library and in the Święta Lipka music archive.

⁵ Some of Zarzycki's piano and chamber music works have been published in recent years by the Gdynia – based publishing house Eufonium.

⁶ Details of the competition programme can be found at: <https://konkursmuzyki-polskiej.pl/>, accessed 23 Oct. 2020.

Aleksander Zarzycki – A Biographical Profile

Born on 26 February 1834 in Lwów (now Lviv, Ukraine), Aleksander Zarzycki graduated from a secondary school in Sambor. He began his musical education under the guidance of his father, an amateur violinist. He then studied with such masters as Joseph Christoph Kessler, Rudolf Violen, and Napoléon Henri Reber. He also took up supplementary studies in composition and piano under Carl Reinecke in Leipzig (1860).⁷

At the beginning of his career, Zarzycki gained fame mainly as a pianist. He went on his first concert tour still as a student, in 1856, at the age of twenty-two, in the company of violinist Nikodem Biernacki. The duo performed, among others, in Iasi (Romania), Poznań, and three times in Kraków.⁸ Zarzycki played his first major concert on 30 March 1860 in Salle Herz in the capital of France. The concert's programme included original works by Zarzycki, such as his *Piano Concerto* Op. 17, *Grande Polonaise* Op. 7, as well as compositions by Fryderyk Chopin and Adolf von Henselt. From 1862 onwards, after the successful debut in France, Zarzycki gave a series of concerts, first in Koblenz, Wiesbaden, Dresden, and later in Leipzig at the Gewandhaus (1863), in Bonn and Cologne (1864). During this period, the composer-pianist also gave concerts in the territory of present-day Poland, including Wrocław (4 February 1865), and twice in Poznań (on 6 February at the Bazaar and on 22 February at the Municipal Theatre). Three years later (in 1868) Zarzycki also visited London and Vienna with his programme. His concerts were highly appreciated by the audience, as evident from this comment by Maria Zduniak concerning one of the composer's concerts in Wrocław:

This concert, demonstrating Zarzycki's versatile skills, gave the audience considerable satisfaction. The artist turned out to be an excellent pianist and awed the audience by playing the entire program from memory. His piano talent and composing skills won sincere critical acclaim.⁹

⁷ Chmara-Żaczekiewicz, 'Aleksander Zarzycki' 332.

⁸ Chmara-Żaczekiewicz, 'Aleksander Zarzycki', 332.

⁹ W. Żeleński, 'Aleksander Zarzycki: ze wspomnień osobistych', in J. Kleczyński, ed., *Echo muzyczne, teatralne i artystyczne*, XII (1895), 567.

Zarzycki was particularly eager to include in his concert repertoires the music of nineteenth-century masters. Apart from the already mentioned pieces by Chopin and Henselt, he would also perform *Hungarian Rhapsody* No. 13 and *Spanish Rhapsody* by Franz Liszt, compositions by Robert Schumann, Franz Schubert, Ludwig van Beethoven, and Anton Rubinstein,¹⁰ among others.

The composer's numerous travels facilitated making new acquaintances. Zarzycki had the opportunity to associate with great European talents, such as Liszt, the already mentioned Reber and Reinecke, as well as the Rubinstein brothers and Spanish violinist-composer Pablo Sarasate. Contact with such major personalities from the world of music undoubtedly had a direct impact on the formation of Zarzycki's characteristic musical style, which however, did not lack individual features.¹¹ It is also worth mentioning that apart from the opportunity to mingle with world-famous composers, Zarzycki also met eminent Polish poets, whose texts he set in his songs. For about a dozen years from around 1851, Zarzycki was a regular guest in Miłosław, on the estate of Count Seweryn Mielżyński. The count's house was an important centre of artistic life in Greater Poland. It was there that Zarzycki had the opportunity to meet, among others, such poets as Teofil Lenartowicz, Władysław Syrokomla, and Józef Ignacy Kraszewski.¹²

In 1866 Zarzycki settled permanently in Warsaw. He limited his concert career in order fully to dedicate himself to composing and teaching.¹³ The composer played an immense role in the flourishing of artistic life in nineteenth-century Warsaw. In the years 1871–1874 he was the artistic director of the newly established Warsaw Music Society, of which he was also a co-founder. His activity at WMS was extremely important for this institution. It was thanks to Zarzycki that the society took its seat in the Ball Chambers of the Grand Theatre in Warsaw, where already after a month of activity WMS held its first major music concert. Over time, such concerts became a tradition. In 1871 Zarzycki set up a mixed choir, which he conducted until 1875. In 1872 he also established a string orchestra. In 1874 Zarzycki founded the WMS music publishing house.

¹⁰ J. Skarbowski, *Sylwetki pianistów polskich. Od Wincentego Lessla do Henryka Puchalskiego*, 1 (1996), 111–114.

¹¹ Żeleński, 'Aleksander Zarzycki...', 566.

¹² J. Mechanisz, *Poczet kompozytorów polskich* (2004), 142–143.

¹³ Żeleński, 'Aleksander Zarzycki...', 568.

Its first publication was a piano transcription of Stanisław Moniuszko's *Crimean Sonnets*. In 1875, as a result of a decision by the Russian authorities, which looked askance at the composer's Austrian citizenship, Zarzycki was forced to resign as director of Warsaw Music Society. The position was taken over by Józef Wieniawski. After leaving WMS, Zarzycki became the choir and orchestra director at the Cathedral of St John the Baptist in Warsaw, a post he held in 1879–1892.¹⁴

After the death of Apolinary Kątski, on 13 September 1879 the Supervisory Board of the Music Institute in Warsaw entrusted Zarzycki with the position of director of this music college. At the Institute, the composer strove to establish European standards of teaching. With this aim in mind, he introduced a number of reforms, re-writing the syllabuses of all courses. The changes included, among others, the obligation to play works by Johann Sebastian Bach, études by Carl Czerny, Hermann Berens, Theodor Kullak, and Stephen Heller in the piano class. Thanks to Zarzycki's efforts, Ignacy Jan Paderewski and Stanisław Barcewicz, among other personalities, began to teach at the Institute. The newly elected director himself took over the 'collective music training', the school's orchestra and the top years of the piano. Apart from classes, Zarzycki also organised musical soirees where both students and teachers could present themselves. He reserved, however, the right to approve the repertoire that was to be performed during such concerts (he only accepted works that he found valuable).¹⁵

Zarzycki resisted the progressive Russification of the Institute, frequently risking conflict with the authorities. From the academic year of 1887/1888, that institution's newly amended statute included a regulation concerning the cancellation of all courses taught in Polish and the requirement that the head of the music college had to be a Russian citizen, fully subjected to the Russian authority. Zarzycki, who had

¹⁴ A. Spóz, 'Warszawskie Towarzystwo Muzyczne', in A. Spóz, ed., *Kultura muzyczna Warszawy drugiej połowy XIX wieku* (1980), 42–54.

¹⁵ A. Rutkowska, 'Nauczanie muzyki w Warszawie w drugiej połowie XIX w. (1861–1918)', in *Kultura muzyczna Warszawy...*, 17–33. Because of his objections to some of the repertoires which were to be performed during these 'musical evenings', Zarzycki exposed himself to hostility from some of his fellow teachers. As a result, he could no longer organise concerts at the Institute, so he began to invite everyone to 'musical soirees' held in his own home.

Austrian citizenship, was thus forced to resign from the post of director of Warsaw's Music Institute.¹⁶

In the late 1880s he became seriously ill, which, however, did not stop him from accepting an honorary fellowship of the Government Theatres of Warsaw (1888). He also continued to perform. Zarzycki played his last concert in March 1895 in the Warsaw City Hall. He died in the same year, on 1 November, and was buried a few days later in the Powązki Cemetery.¹⁷

Aleksander Zarzycki's Oeuvre

Zarzycki's output comprises more than forty opuses and several unnumbered works, including orchestral and chamber music, pieces for solo piano, songs for four-part choir and for voice and piano, three cantatas and an arrangement of the song *Boże coś Polskę* [*God Thou Hast Poland*] for piano.¹⁸

These compositions represent varied artistic standards. We can find both short, uncomplicated salon miniatures and elaborate virtuosic pieces among them. Some draw on the music of other composers (mainly Moniuszko and Chopin), while others abound in individual solutions. Musicologist Józef Reiss described Zarzycki's oeuvre as follows:

[It] is characterized by Polishness, refined form and elegant taste as well as noble lyricism. Characteristic of his piano music is the miniature, light, witty and graceful, with subtle harmonies. It is salon music in the best sense of the word.¹⁹

Vocal Music

Songs, especially solo ones, undoubtedly constitute the largest group in Aleksander Zarzycki's artistic output. The composer wrote nearly

¹⁶ Rutkowska, 'Nauczanie muzyki w Warszawie...', 17–33.

¹⁷ Skarbowski, *Sylwetki pianistów...*, 112.

¹⁸ Chmara-Żaczekiewicz, 'Aleksander Zarzycki', 332.

¹⁹ Żeleński, 'Aleksander Zarzycki...', 569.

sixty of them. His songs have sometimes been criticised for wrong word accents and incorrect counterpoint.²⁰ All the same, his solo songs are worthy of attention. Their artistic value is not different from, for example, Moniuszko songs.²¹ In Zarzycki's own times, these pieces attracted great audience acclaim. Listeners appreciated their simple melodies, the expressive role of accompaniment, and the choice of poetic texts. The song *Między nami nic nie było* [*There Was Nothing Between Us*] from *Śpiewnik na jeden głos* [*Songbook for One Voice*] Op. 13 was one of those to have gained great popularity. This song was made especially famous by the Polish singer Marcelina Sembrich Kochańska, who performed it in Europe and the United States.²² The substantial artistic value of Zarzycki's songs was recognised, among others, by the composer's close friend Władysław Żeleński, who thus wrote about his songs after the artist's death:

From among the artistic achievements of the late Aleksander, we appreciate the most those songs that have enriched our musical literature with genuine inspired pearls. In them, Zarzycki proved to be a true poet [...]. These are veritable little jewels, the splendour and artistic setting of which are genuinely impressive. Everything about them is refined and noble.²³

Zarzycki wrote his songs during two development phases in the history of the Polish artistic song genre.²⁴ According to the division proposed by Mieczysław Tomaszewski, Zarzycki's works should be classified as belonging to either the High Romantic (Opp. 2 and 9) or the late Romantic phase (the remaining compositions).²⁵ Despite the temporal division into stages (according to the date of composition), these songs maintain a homogeneous style derived from the works of the High Romantic era.

²⁰ W. Poźniak, 'Pieśń solowa po Moniuszce', in A. Nowak-Romanowicz ed., *Z dziejów polskiej kultury muzycznej. Od oświecenia do Młodej Polski* (1966), 452.

²¹ Chmara-Żaczekiewicz, 'Aleksander Zarzycki', 334.

²² Chmara-Żaczekiewicz, 'Aleksander Zarzycki', 334.

²³ Żeleński, 'Aleksander Zarzycki...', 569.

²⁴ Mieczysław Tomaszewski, 'Pieśń polska "wieku uniesień". Rekonesans', in W. Nowik, ed., *Topos narodowy w muzyce polskiej pierwszej połowy XIX wieku*, 1, (2006). The author presents five development phases of the Polish Romantic song, in chronological order: pre-Romantic, early Romantic, High Romantic, late Romantic, and post-Romantic.

²⁵ Tomaszewski, 'Pieśń polska "wieku uniesień"...'.

Allegro giojoso. *p* A. ZARZYCKI.

Mię-dzy na-mi nie nie by-ło! nie-dzy na-mi nie nie by-ło!
Nichts hat zwischen uns ge-ge-ben! Nichts hat zwischen uns ge-ge-ben!

sempre staccato e leggero

poco rit. - - - a tempo

żadnych zwierzei, wyznań ja-dnych, nie nasz so-bą nie łą-czy-ło, prócz wio-sen-nych marzeń zdradnych,
Treuer Lie-be still Bekennt-niss hat verknüpft uns fürs Le-ben, und ein süß Na-tur-verständnis;

poco rit. - - - a tempo

prócz tych wo-ni, barw i blasków, prócz tych wo-ni, barw i blasków, u-no-szą-cych się w przestrzeni,
all' das Duf-teu Schimmern, Klingen, all' das Duf-teu, Schimmern, Klingen, das sich re-ge-t in den Lüf-ten.

Ex. 1. A. Zarzycki, *Między nami nic nie było*, mm. 1–18.

Zarzycki composed songs to texts by both famous and obscure, Polish and foreign poets. Most frequently, however, he set poems by Adam Asnyk (16 songs) and Heinrich Heine (6 songs). The topics of Zarzycki's songs fully correspond to the trends of his time. The focus is on love themes, often combined with patriotic and additional rustic-pastoral elements (numerous descriptions of nature, rural customs). The songs are autonomous works (rather than forming cycles, as in Schubert's case); most of them were grouped into larger sets consisting of several pieces each. The most extensive collections of Zarzycki's songs are the two *Songbooks for One Voice*, Opp. 13 and 14, which consciously refer to Stanisław Moniuszko's *Śpiewniki domowe* [*Songbooks for Home Use*], of an egalitarian character.²⁶

Apart from solo vocal pieces, Zarzycki's output also includes choral songs written for four-part choir, such as: *Pieśń nocnego wędrowca*

²⁶ Chmara-Żaczekiewicz, 'Aleksander Zarzycki', 334.

[*A Nightly Wanderer's Song*] (to a poetic rendering by Aleksander Michaux of a poem originally written by Johann Wolfgang Goethe) as well as *Two Songs* ('Chór Strzelców' ['Chorus of Hunters'] to words by Stefan Florian Garczyński and 'Z łąk i pól' ['From Meadows and Fields'] to a poem by Maria Konopnicka). The composer also wrote two sacred choral settings, *Veni Creator* and *Salve Regina*.²⁷ His other vocal works include three cantatas: *Hymn do muzyki* [*Hymn to Music*] for mixed choir, wind instruments and harp, *Chór myśliwych* [*Chorus of Hunters*] for four male voices, piano and two horns, as well as *Serenade* for soprano, piano and orchestra. These are the compositions that appear in lists of Zarzycki's works. However, accessing the musical material is an extremely difficult task. Precise analyses of song structures and the appraisal of their aesthetic values therefore still wait to be performed.²⁸

Piano Miniatures

The vast majority of Aleksander Zarzycki's compositions, apart from solo songs, are piano pieces. Polish music of the second half of the nineteenth century abounded in this type of repertoire, mainly due to the expansion of the piano as a music instrument, which became more and more popular not only in large concert halls, but also in small salons. Moreover, the piano can be said to have acted as a transmitter of all the music literature in the nineteenth century (orchestral works were also very often arranged, for example, for two pianos). The instrument allowed composers perfectly to reflect their intimate experience, for instance by differentiating sound colours and dynamics.

In Zarzycki's output, we can find many genres of piano music that are representative of his times. They are mainly mazurkas, such as *Deux Mazurkas* Op. 12, 20, and 36, *Mazurka in E major*, Op. 38, both drawing on Chopin. Another example of dance forms among Zarzycki's piano works are his waltzes: *The Great Waltz in G minor* Op. 4, *Valse Brillante in A-flat major* Op. 8 and the *Great Waltz in D major* Op. 18, which exhibit virtuosic elements. Moreover, among the composer's piano works there are also examples of lyrical miniatures, including

²⁷ Mechanisz, *Poczet...*, 142.

²⁸ Chmara-Żaczekiewicz, 'Aleksander Zarzycki', 333.

nocturnes (*Deux nocturnes* Op. 10), songs without words (*Deux Chant Sans paroles* Op. 6), a serenade (*Serenade in A-flat major* Op. 24), and many others.

The illustrious Antoni Sygietyński thus wrote about the aforementioned *Serenade* in *Echo Muzyczne*:

Serenade, pure piano music, is a gem of erotic poetry, full of grace and simplicity. Against the background of peaceful harmonies, the melody of passionate affection is clearly outlined. The two bars of the ritornelli, skilfully interwoven three times into the whole, give this piece an original and extremely refined form. Love breathes from every measure, from every note, and noble love it is, without sloppy sentimentality and devoid of any exaggeration in the manner of expressing emotions.²⁹

The *Serenade*'s structure is indeed not very complicated. However, it seems perfectly to meet the principles implied in its name. The serenade was a kind of love song performed to the accompaniment of (usually) a guitar under the window of a loved one. In Zarzycki's *Serenade* we can likewise find elements referring to this traditional form. The simple chordal accompaniment, coupled with arpeggio articulation, is certainly meant to evoke distinct associations with guitar playing, and provides a perfect background for the lyrical cantilena that unfolds above the accompaniment.

Briefly to summarise Zarzycki's piano output, one should first of all point to the strongly emphasised lyricism present in his compositions. As for the melodies, they demonstrate a characteristic song-like quality alternating with virtuosic passages.

Chamber Music

Piano miniatures and solo songs were undoubtedly the genres most frequently exploited by Polish composers in the second half of the nineteenth century (and thus preserved in the greatest number to the present). This was due, among others, to smaller requirements with regard to their performance. Bringing together a small chamber ensemble, not to mention a large symphony orchestra, was often very

²⁹ J. Kleczyński, *Echo Muzyczne*, 38 (1894).

problematic in the difficult times when the Polish nation had no state of its own. In the musical literature of that period we can nevertheless find chamber music works. In his publication *Z dziejów polskiej kultury* [From the History of Polish Culture], Włodzimierz Poźniak observes that the amount of chamber music composed in the Polish territories under the partitions was not small at all, but many of these works have not survived to our times.³⁰ However, some chamber music by Polish composers has successfully been restored to concert (and publishing) life; this concerns, among others, works by Antoni Stolpe, Antoni Rutkowski, Zygmunt Stojewski, and by Zarzycki himself.³¹

Among Zarzycki's chamber pieces, one can mention the *Romance in E major* Op. 16, *Deuxième Mazurka in E major* Op. 39 and the *Mazurka in G major* Op. 26, as well as works that were originally composed for the orchestra, but also exist in versions for smaller performing forces (*Andante et Polonaise in A major* Op. 23 for violin and piano, *Introduction et Cracovienne in E major* Op. 35 for violin and piano).

One of Zarzycki's most famous compositions is the *Mazurka in G major* Op. 26 for violin and piano, which brought the composer great popularity and recognition. It belongs to the canon of violin literature. It was composed in 1884 and dedicated to Pablo Sarasate. The Spanish violinist liked this virtuosic mazurka and enjoyed performing it as an encore, thus contributing to the popularisation of this work on an international scale.³²

Zarzycki's chamber music composition that comes second in terms of popularity, directly after the *Mazurka in G major*, is the *Romance in E major* Op. 16 for violin and piano.³³ It was printed in 1875 by the German publishing house Bote & Bock. As we read in Jerzy Kusiak's *Przewodnik po muzyce skrzypcowej* [Guide to Violin Music]:

³⁰ W. Poźniak, 'Pieśń solowa...', 453.

³¹ Interest in performances of music by the above-mentioned composers is exemplified, among others, by the programme of the above-mentioned Stanisław Moniuszko International Competition of Polish Music (see footnote 6). In the publishing market, Eufonium is the leader in the field of works by somewhat forgotten Polish composers (<http://www.eufonium.pl/pl/>).

³² J. Kusiak, *Przewodnik po muzyce skrzypcowej* (2014), 472.

³³ In the entry for 'Aleksander Zarzycki' in the *PWM Musical Encyclopedia*, one can find a note that the *Romance in E Major* was originally intended for wind quartet and violin. See Chmara-Żaczekiewicz, 'Aleksander Zarzycki'.

Ex. 2. A. Zarzycki, *Mazurka in G major* Op. 26, mm. 7–22.

The *Romance*, though not as popular as the *Mazurka in G major*, continues to captivate the ear with its poetic mood, noble melody and original harmonies. Its form is immaculate, exhibiting a great sense of the instrument's character, using the full range of the violin.³⁴

Orchestral Works

Orchestral works written in partitioned Poland in the second half of the nineteenth century are relatively rare due to the small number of orchestras then available. Composers who decided to write orchestral pieces were frequently aware that their works may not be performed by full orchestral forces in their own lifetime. This is why many artists resolved to arrange their orchestral works for chamber ensembles. This

³⁴ Kusiak, *Przewodnik...*, 472.

practice was also very frequent in the output of Aleksander Zarzycki, who likewise rewrote some of his orchestral works for violin and piano, and in the case of the *Concerto* – for two pianos.

Zarzycki's orchestral works include: *Solemn Overture, Polish Suite* Op. 37, *Great Polonaise in E-flat major* Op. 7 for piano and orchestra (dedicated to Hans von Bülow), *Andante et Polonaise in A major* Op. 23 for violin and orchestra, and *Introduction et Cracovienne in D major* Op. 35 for violin and orchestra. These works strongly emphasize the values idiomatic to Polish music in the period following the national uprisings, such as national elements. They are present in the very titles of some works (e.g. *Polish Suite*), as well as in references to folk music, such as elements of Polish national dances (the polonaise, the mazurka, the krakowiak) incorporated into the composer's output.

Probably the second most popular work by Zarzycki, after the *Mazurka in G major*, is his *Concerto in A-flat major* Op. 17 for piano and orchestra, dedicated to Nikolai Rubinstein. In the second half of the nineteenth century, the first piano concerto in partitioned Poland was composed by Józef Wieniawski (in 1858), while the second came from Aleksander Zarzycki, and was premiered in 1860 in Paris. The composer played it in Warsaw, for the first time in 1868, and in a revised version twelve years later. After the first presentation of the concerto in front of the Warsaw audience, the Polish pianist and music critic Jan Kleczyński wrote in his review:

The *Andante* is nobly conceived and constructed. In the finale, we like the first theme less than the second. The passages are graceful. It seems that, though there is no distinct similarity at any point, the image of Chopin's wonderful *Concerto in F minor* loomed large in the composer's soul.³⁵

Zarzycki's concerto consists of two movements: *Andante in A-flat major* and *Allegro non troppo in F minor*. It was probably originally planned as a three-movement work. The first movement takes the form of a nocturne with a contrasted middle segment based on a recitative. It is a very long movement, marked by the strong presence of the krakowiak rhythm. As in the 1858 concerto by Wieniawski, Zarzycki resigned from bringing in a full orchestral *tutti* in the first section. The

³⁵ Żeleński, 'Aleksander Zarzycki...', 569.

second movement is an example of the sonata form. The work is characterised by internal stylistic diversity and subtle instrumentation.³⁶ The composer makes use of remarkable harmonic solutions, which include frequent dissonances combined with complicated functional relations. The meditative mood is built, among others, by making the whole sound like chamber music and avoiding frequent *tuttis*. Conversely, the piano part, not devoid of figurative virtuosity, makes use of the full sonic possibilities of this instrument.³⁷

The image displays a page of a musical score for the second movement of Aleksander Zarzycki's Piano Concerto in A-flat major, Op. 17. The tempo is marked 'Andante'. The score is arranged for a full orchestra and piano. The orchestral parts include Flauti, Oboi, Clarinetti in B, Fagotti, Corni in F, Tromboni tenore, Trombone basso, and Timpani in F.C. The piano part is labeled 'PIANO'. The string parts include Violino I, Violino II, Viola, Violoncello, and Basso. The score features various dynamics such as *mp*, *p*, and *express*, and includes performance instructions like *solo* and *pizz.* (pizzicato). The score is written in a single system with multiple staves for each instrument.

Ex. 3. A. Zarzycki, *Piano Concerto in A-flat major* Op. 17, mm. 1–11.

³⁶ Chmara-Żaczekiewicz, 'Aleksander Zarzycki', 333.

³⁷ Poniatowska, *Historia Muzyki...*, 477.

Zarzycki's *Piano Concerto in A-flat major* Op. 17 was performed, apart from the composer himself, also by other virtuoso pianists such as Berthe Marx Goldschmidt, Franciszek Bylicki, Józef Śmidrowicz, and Władysław Kędra.³⁸

Zarzycki's output of compositions did not contribute to any breakthrough in Polish music. The composer's oeuvre demonstrates his indebtedness to the works of Chopin, Moniuszko, and other European masters. Zarzycki's compositions present a highly varied artistic level, which made commentators speak now favourably, now critically about them. His musical themes are characterised by notable lyrical melodiousness combined with virtuosic elements. The harmonic solutions he used were in no way innovative, but nevertheless sound interesting in their own manner. It is undoubtedly a body of works worthy of being explored by both performers and researchers of nineteenth-century Polish music.

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³⁸ Chmara-Żaczekiewicz, 'Aleksander Zarzycki', 333.

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