

SCHARWENKA: Piano Concertos 2 & 3
Seta Tanyel, Hanover Radio Philharmonic/
Tadeusz Strugala - Collins 4485 (Allegro) 79 min

"Energy, harmonic interest, strong rhythm, many beautiful melodies, and much Polish national character" - all this and much more is to be found in the music of Franz Xaver Scharwenka, writes HV Hamilton in the pages of *Grove's*. Donald Manildi in his review of Seta Tanyel's earlier disc of Scharwenka's First Concerto (July/Aug 1992) reminds us that this sort of effusive, heart-on-sleeve keyboard writing is "an exhilarating celebration of what the piano can really sound like when a skilled virtuoso-composer produces a brilliant vehicle aimed at nothing more (or less) than the pure enjoyment of soloist and audience." Why then is his music played so seldom in concert these days? The one piece you may still encounter on recital programs is the *Polish Dance*, a

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from its predecessor, years that saw a shift in emphasis from the soloist (as in the Third Concerto) to a work where piano and orchestra are much more integrated and also cyclical in form in the manner of Liszt. The stentorian horn call that opens the concerto may be heard in more subdued fashion near the end of the Adagio and is also miraculously transformed into a blithely effervescent rondo in the final movement. The horns are answered in assertive fashion by the soloist, and the similarity to the B-flat minor Concerto of Tchaikovsky is striking and causes one to wonder once again why this splendid score is not better known. Here I know of no recorded competition.

While the Hanover recording locale is not all that unflattering to the orchestra, the low end of the piano seems damped somewhat in 2, at times creating a bit of a scrim effect; 3 sounds better. The ensemble under Tadeusz Strugala offers warm and sympathetic support, though separation seems stronger side-to-side than front-to-back. Fortunately the ear soon adjusts. I have a feeling that Stephen Hough on Hyperion may need to look to his laurels when Ms Tanyel gets around to Scharwenka's Fourth Concerto.

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