Wojciech Kilar – September Symphony Lament for Choir (2003)

1. Lament, for a cappella choir 2. September Symphony: Largo 3. September Symphony: Allegro play 4. September Symphony: Largo 5. September Symphony: Moderato
Warsaw Philharmonic Chamber Orchestra Antoni Wit, Henryk Wojnarowski – conductors

I purchased this CD at Virgin Records on a recent trip to London as a gamble. I won. This symphony commemorates 9/11 in music. The music makes quite an impact. The scherzo should become a brass classic, just listen to the power. There are some very beautiful moments also. Can't believe it was just composed a couple years ago. There are some subtle elements of Harris and Bernstein in sections and maybe others. This disc has joined my desert island collection. ---Joihn C. Leopold

I discovered Wojciech Kilar's music maybe 15 years ago with the release of Coppola's Dracula. There is a magical moment when you know you have come across a very poignant compositional voice. It has been with me ever since. As he has not been an A-List Hollywood composer, releases of his music are few and far between. It seems he has had a tough relationship with the medium of film music. He started as an avant-guarde radical, moved into polish and french movie music (to make a living), all-the-while producing a small but important body of work for the concert hall. Angelus is a lovely concert piece which could have easily been in Dracula itself, replete with whispering tormented chorus. Kilar's music is a hellish reflection of Arvo Part's divine image of mystical minimalism.

All of Kilar's work is imbued with a similar "existential dread" to that of Philip Glass, but in many

ways the music couldn't be more different. September Symphony is a watershed moment in 20th (21th) Century music. Kilar is undoubtedly a European composer. His gushy film orchestrational ability give him the ability to connect with an audience, and the seemingly simple musical material is dececptively complex. This approachability is right out of the Glass school, but the complexity does not lie in necessarily rythmnic overlapping, chromaticism, or any other means of dissection; Kilar's music has a heart. He states in the liner notes that he grew up loving the idea of America and what it stands for...perhaps he mostly only ever knew America through movies and polular art (this will come to bear). The first movement is a haunting descriptive figure of falling notes. We enter directly into a human drama (as with Brahms #1). This music is filled with heartache, tragedy, and some sort of understanding relative to people and their love for one another.

The second movement is fast, perhaps describing the fury of the direct aftermath of the events. The third movement, which to some is a problem, infuses pastiche, musical cliches, and schmaltz. This was very deliberatively done, but what the listener needs to understand is, it was done with sincerity. When the broad brass motives come in, you cannot help but think of Copland, and then 'American the Beautiful" is echoed in the celeste, it reflects on some sort of nostalgia for that idea of america...this all acts as a post mortem to a giant climax of the falling motif.

The final movement is a more contrapunctal examination of American sounds. No such musical statement has ever been made more sincerely. Kilar responded to the pleading of Antoni Wit, the conductor, who begged him for 30 years to write a symphony. The composer responded with what I considering one of the great works of our time. Sadly, classical music academics and their deeply rooted predjudices and short tolerance for anyone affiliated with film music will probably take its toll on the Symphony's actual performance. We are lucky to have this recording, and look for a touring Polish Orchestra in a city near you if you ever hope to hear it live. ---R. Guerin

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