Krzysztof Penderecki – St. Luke Passion (Antoni Wit) [2004]



1. O Crux Ave 2. Et egressus 3. Deus Meus 4. Domine, quis habitat 5. Adhuc eo loquente 6. Ierusalem 7. Ut quid, Domine 8. Comprehendentes autem eum 9. Iudica me, Deus 10. Et viri, qui tenebant illum 11. Ierusalem 12. Miserere mei, Deus 13. Et surgens omnis 14. Et in pulverum 15. Et baiulans sibi crucem 16. Populе meus 17. Ibi crucifixerunt eum 18. Crux fidelis 19. Iesus autem dicebat 20. In pulverum mortis 21. Et stabat populus 22. Unus autem 23. Stabant autem iuxta crucem 24. Stabat Mater 25. Erat autem fere hora sexta 26. Alla breve 27. In pulverem mortis...In te, Domine, speravi Izabella Klosinska - soprano Adam Kruszewski - baritone Romuald Tesarowicz - bass Krzysztof Kolberger - voice Jaroslaw Malanowicz - organ Warsaw Boys' Choir Warsaw National Philharmonic Choir Warsaw Philharmonic Chamber Orchestra Antoni Wit - conductor

Krzysztof Penderecki's St. Luke Passion (Passio et mors Domini Nostri Jesu Christi secundum Lucam) is considered by many to be a landmark work in the history of twentieth century. One would not know that from the degree to which the work has been recorded; since its 1965 premiere, the St. Luke Passion has only been recorded in its entirety three times. This includes the original 1966 Polish recording under Henryk Czyz, a recording for Argo under the composer made in 1989, and finally a live performance led by Marc Soustrot for MD&G in 1999. Thus, Naxos' Penderecki: St. Luke Passion, recorded in 2002, is only the fourth entry in the slim Penderecki St. Luke Passion sweepstakes. Conductor Antoni Wit takes the Warsaw National Philharmonic Choir & Orchestra by the hand and leads it through this difficult and treacherous score.

Wit is an old hand with anything Penderecki, having already recorded all of Penderecki's orchestral music on three Naxos volumes. Wit manages to keep the orchestra together and in one voice, and the chorus is splendid, ululating, exploding, and wailing ecstatically just as Penderecki requires it to. Vocal soloists Izabella Klosinska, Adam Kruszewski, and Jaroslaw Malanowicz are a bit of a drag on the proceedings. All three seem barely up to their parts and happy just to get through them without bursting their lungs. The recording is also a little distant

and balanced toward extremes of volume -- soft passages are barely audible, whereas loud ones tear your head off.

Landmark work or not, one can easily see why Penderecki's St. Luke Passion isn't recorded with more frequency. It is big, expensive, and difficult to perform and a real challenge for the listener. Conventional wisdom dictates that Penderecki's own 1989 recording of the St. Luke Passion is the best on records, and the Wit, while good, doesn't quite rise to the challenge. Nevertheless, in a pinch, especially as the Penderecki performance no longer seems to be available, the Naxos is a viable option, and one can't beat the asking price. ---Uncle Dave Lewis, Rovi

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