

Szymanowski : Violin Concerto No.1 – Mythes (Wilkomirska)

Written by bluesever

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1. *Violin Concerto No.1 op.35* Wanda Wilkomirska – violin Sydney Opera Orchestra
Niklaus Wyss – conductor, 1983
2. *Mythes op.30* 0:00-- *La Fontaine d'Arethus* 5:11-- *Narcisse* 12:05--*Dryades et Pan*
Wanda Wilkomirska – violin Antonio Barbosa – piano

Szymanowski composed the three *Mity* (Myths) from March to June 1915, while he was at Jósef Jaroszyński's estate. They were written for Paweł Kochański (1887-1934), a brilliant violinist and a member of the Warsaw Philharmonic, who had composed cadenzas for Szymanowski's concertos and transcribed (for violin and piano) some of the composer's other works. Kochański's involvement with the compositional process was such that he became a collaborator, just as he was in Szymanowski's two violin concertos. *Mythes* is dedicated to Zofia Kochański, the violinist's wife.

A few years before his death, Szymanowski wrote that he and Kochański had created "a new style, a new mode of expression for the violin." Some have described this new style as "impressionistic." This term makes sense when one considers Szymanowski's use of timbre as a structural element, an approach similar to Debussy's.

The violin technique required to perform *Mythes* is considerable. The piece is filled with double stops, harmonics, quarter tones, and glissandi, and the composer calls for simultaneous arco bowing and left-hand pizzicato. *Mythes* resembles piano music by Scriabin in its use of dense motives. Recurring sounds, as much as thematic manipulation, delineate the forms of the three movements. "*La Fontaine d'Aréthuse*" became the most popular of the three sections of *Mythes*, most likely because it is less harmonically adventurous than its partners. It opens with a shimmering wash of sound in the piano, octave leaps in the left hand passing above and below repeated chords in the right, played *ppp* with the sustain pedal. While the rapid leaps of this

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"fountain" music suggest splashing water, the polytonal harmony creates anticipation. High above this colorful idea, the violin eventually enters with a soaring melodic gesture. As the piece progresses it becomes clear that the fountain music, with its irregular meter, is as much a theme as a textural gesture, and its return after a short *molto agitato* passage signals the approaching close of the piece, in which the violin again plays its first melody, but in a lower register.

"Narcisse," the slow central movement, is more melodic in conception than "La Fontaine d'Aréthuse." Sonata-like, it boasts two contrasting thematic ideas, but there is no development section. Instead, the middle portion of "Narcisse" presents new material.

"Dryades et Pan" opens with a quarter-tone trill depicting the summer wind. The ensuing, flashy dance of the Dryads is interrupted by Pan's flute, suggested by harmonics on the unaccompanied violin. After Pan and the Dryads dance until they drop, the wind returns to close the piece with a quiet reprise of Pan's theme. --- John Palmer, Rovi

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