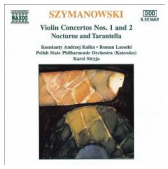
Szymanowski – Violin Concertos Nocturne Tarantella (Kulka) [1990]



1. Violin Concerto No. 1, Op. 35, M37 2. Violin Concerto No. 2, Op. 61, M71 3. Nocturne 4. Tarantella Konstanty Andrzej Kulka – violin Polish State Philharmonic Chorus & Orchestra Karol Stryja – conductor (1,3,4) Roman Lasocki - conductor (2)

I first came to Szymanowski's music through his chamber music and his beautifully atmospheric liturgical pieces. Born in a part of Poland that's now part of the Ukraine, Szymanowski's music was not immediately taken up by his Polish compatriots during his lifetime, but there seems to be a worldwide burst of enthusiasm lately for his music, long overdue and well deserved. Influenced as a composer by Scriabin, Debussy, and of course Chopin, Szymanowski's music remains tonal, but imbued with a shifting sense of loosening the moorings of classical harmony and outline, breathing extraordinary new impetus into the still nascent Second Viennese School that was yet to come to full fruition. This recording of the Violin Concertos and the accompanying Nocturne and Tarentella should go a long way toward securing his evocative, highly individual musical voice a vibrant place in the mainstream of classical music performance. The First Concerto, especially, reveals explicitly much of what makes Szymanowski's music a constant surprise, rewarding, thrilling, even sensual. First, Konstanty Andrzej Kulka's violin playing is stunningly fine. He consistently reaches into the music with intelligence, and the recorded sound is beautiful. Highly atmospheric conditions of the piece are never allowed to drift toward the slightest falsity. Here is a first-rate fiddler! And it's hard to praise highly enough the playing of the Polish State Philharmonia Orchestra conducted by Karol Stryja throughout this entire recording. What an orchestra, and having encountered Stryja's work before, what a conductor! Finally, the sonics here are really special, something that has become a praiseworthy standard of Naxos' remarkable recordings. Classical music recordings would be impoverished without the impeccable contributions of this label. Recommended with real enthusiasm, coupled with a recommendation to check out additional Szymanowski scores, especially his wondrous Lieder Der Märchenprinzessin, the consistently satisfying piano works, the well known Third Symphony, and his chamber music scores. The Violin concertos in this recording are a perfect place to start a wonderful journey of discovery. --- J. Anderson, amazon.com

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