

NAXOS

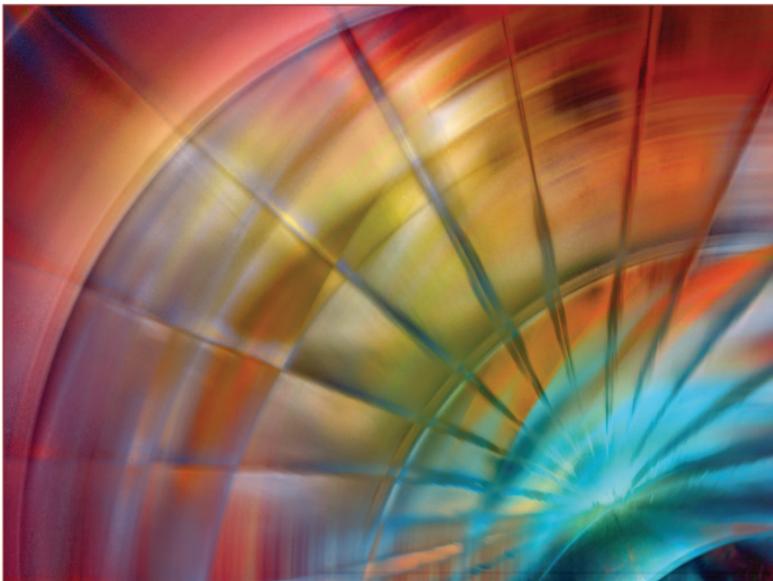
Karol
SZYMANOWSKI

Symphonies Nos. 1 and 4

Concert Overture • Study in B flat minor

Jan Krzysztof Broja, Piano

Warsaw Philharmonic Orchestra • Antoni Wit



Karol Szymanowski (1882-1937):

Concert Overture, Op. 12 • Symphony No. 1 in F minor, Op. 15 • Symphony No. 4 'Symphonie Concertante', Op. 60 • Study in B flat minor, Op. 4, No. 3 (orch. Grzegorz Fitelberg)

Karol Szymanowski was born at Tymoszkówka in the Kiev District of the Ukraine in 1882, the son of a Polish land-owner and of a mother of Swedish extraction, born Baroness Anna Taube. The family and their immediate circle had a deep interest in the arts, a fact reflected in the subsequent careers of the five children of the marriage as musicians, poets or painters. Karol's sister Stanisława later became a singer and his brother Feliks a pianist. Szymanowski's early education was at home, since a leg injury at the age of four prevented him from attending school in the neighbouring town of Elisavetgrad (the modern Kirowograd), where, nevertheless, he had music lessons from a relative, Gustav Neuhaus, who had a school there. In 1901 he went to Warsaw to continue his musical studies, taking lessons from the composer Zygmunt Noskowski in counterpoint and composition and from M. Zawirski in harmony.

The feelings of Polish nationalism that had inspired Chopin and his contemporaries continued through the nineteenth century, exacerbated by the repressive measures taken by Russia, in particular, in the face of open revolt. Warsaw in 1901, however, remained as provincial as it had been in the time of Chopin, who had sought his musical fortune abroad in Paris in 1830. The century had seen Polish performers of the greatest distinction, particularly the violinists Lipiński and Wieniawski. The opera composer Stanisław Moniuszko, however, a rival to Chopin in his own country, enjoyed only a local reputation, while his successors, in Szymanowski's esteem, occupied a still lower place. Polish music was to a great extent isolated and provincial, a reflection of the society in which it existed. The new century, however, brought together a group of young musicians of much wider outlook, a circle that included the pianist Artur Rubinstein, the violinist Paweł Kochański and the conductor Grzegorz Fitelberg. The last named, the composer Ludomir Różycki and the pianist and composer Apolinary Szeluto, together with

Szymanowski, established under the patronage of Prince Władysław Lubomirski the Young Poland in Music group, for the publication and promotion of new Polish music. Fitelberg, by training a violinist and composer, made his later career as a conductor, and directed the first concert of the group in Warsaw in 1906, when Szymanowski's *Concert Overture* was performed. He won later distinction as a conductor at the Vienna Staatsoper and in work for the Russian impresario Dyagilev, before returning to direct the Warsaw Philharmonic Orchestra and, from 1947, the Polish Radio Symphony Orchestra in Katowice. Kochański's support was to prove invaluable, particularly in the composition of the first of Szymanowski's two violin concertos and in a number of works written for violin and piano. Rubinstein, who, like Kochański, made his later career in the United States of America, proved an additional champion of Szymanowski, while Paderewski, a musician of more conservative tendency, assisted in the wider dissemination of Szymanowski's piano music, favouring especially the famous *B flat minor Study*, a work that owes much of its popularity to his advocacy.

The first Young Poland concert in Warsaw had included performances of Szymanowski's *Variations on a Polish Folk Theme* and his *Study in B flat minor*, played by the pianist Harry Neuhaus, and had been well enough received. Berlin, however, proved much less interested, when Fitelberg conducted the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra in a similar programme in the same year. Szymanowski spent the following two years principally in Berlin and Leipzig, absorbing still further the influence of Wagner, of Reger and of Richard Strauss, composers of whom he later took a cooler view. This period saw the composition of his *Symphony No. 1 in F minor*, completed in 1907 and given its first performance in Warsaw two years later. The composer subsequently withdrew the symphony and went so far as

to destroy the 1907 piano trio, sensing what seemed to him the excessive influence of the post-Wagnerian, a reflection of a predominant aspect of music of the time in Germany. The following years brought periods at home in the Ukraine and abroad. He wrote his *Penthesilea*, *Opus 18*, an orchestral work with soprano solo derived from the *Achilleis* of the contemporary Polish painter and dramatist Stanisław Wyspiański, in Italy in 1908, and in 1910 completed a very different *Symphony No. 2 in B flat*, *Opus 19*, a work in which the influence of Skryabin is noticeable, as it is in the piano music of this period. The new symphony, played under Fitelberg in Warsaw in 1911, proved unacceptable to both audience and critics, but won acclaim in Berlin, Leipzig and Vienna, establishing the international importance of the composer. Szymanowski determined, after this experience, to live, at least for a time, in Vienna, where Fitelberg was now employed at the Staatsoper, and where he reached an agreement with Universal to publish his work.

Vienna proved less stimulating than Szymanowski had hoped, but the period changed to some extent his musical outlook, particularly through his experience of the music of Debussy and, still more, of Ravel, and of the Dyagilev company in Stravinsky's *Firebird* and *Petrushka*. In March 1914 he left Vienna and travelled south to Italy, Sicily and North Africa, returning through Rome, Paris and London, where he met Stravinsky. The war years he spent in musical isolation at home at Tymoszwówka, turning his attention to a study of Greek civilisation and literature, to the early history of Christianity and to the culture of Islam, the last an extension of an interest aroused by translations of the poems of Hafiz by Hans Bethge, poet of Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde*, some of which he had set to music in 1911, and exemplified in the remarkable *Symphony No. 3*, completed in 1916, using poems by the 13th century Persian mystic and poet Mevlânâ Jalâl ad-Dîn ar-Rûmî.

The Russian revolution put an end to Szymanowski's period of war-time seclusion. The family was compelled to move, for reasons of safety, to Elisavetgrad, and the property at Tymoszwówka was

destroyed by the revolutionaries. In 1919 they moved to Poland, after the proclamation of the new republic. Kochański and Rubinstein prudently chose to settle in the United States, but Szymanowski determined to stay in his own country and to seek there a further source of inspiration, particularly in the more primitive aspects of indigenous music. His reputation grew at home and abroad, and in 1927 he rejected the offer of a position as director of the conservatory in Cairo in favour of the financially less rewarding position of director of the Warsaw Conservatory, which in 1930 became the Warsaw Academy of Music, an institution of which he remained rector until his resignation in 1932.

The five years that Szymanowski spent at the Conservatory and the Academy brought many frustrations, particularly in dealing with musicians of a conservative turn of mind, and these difficulties finally led to his resignation. The remaining years of his life were not easy, without any regular source of income, and he therefore made more public appearances as a performer, writing the piano part of his *Symphony No. 4* in 1932 to suit his own relatively modest piano technique, no longer adequate for the more taxing compositions of his earlier career. In the same year he was greatly encouraged by the performance in Prague of his opera *King Roger*, a work that deals imaginatively with a struggle in medieval Sicily between Christianity and an Eastern Dionysian religion, a further example of his absorption of the essence of other cultures than his own, and of his reading of Euripides.

Szymanowski's final years were clouded by illness and he sought an alleviation of the effects of tuberculosis abroad in Davos, Grasse and Cannes, and finally in Lausanne, where he died on 29th March 1937. His last orchestral work was the *Second Violin Concerto*, completed in 1933, followed by two *Mazurkas* for piano, written in the following year. The ballet *Harnasie*, inspired by the primitive folk-music of the people living in the Tatra mountains, was staged in Prague in 1935 and the following year, with much success, in Paris, with choreography by Serge Lifar. It became a popular part of Polish ballet repertoire after its

first performance in Poznań in 1938, a year after the composer's death.

The *Concert Overture in E major* was written in 1905 and proved in many ways a more satisfactory composition than the later *First Symphony*. At its first performance in Warsaw in 1906 it was welcomed as the work of a composer of clear genius and originality, although it bears a strong enough superficial resemblance to the idiom of Richard Strauss. It shows an impressive command of orchestration, and a gift for melodic invention and harmonic colouring, and, while dramatic and effective enough in itself, may be seen as an early step towards a musical idiom that was to break away from the world of Wagner and Strauss into something more nearly universal.

Szymanowski described his *Symphony No. 1 in F minor* of 1907 as “Monstrum kontrapunktyczno-harmoniczno-orchestrowe”. A Polish critic later castigated the work as “gigantic but insincere, orchestrally more orgiastic and virtuosic than musical, extremely heavy and thick in texture”. The composer certainly found the symphony unsatisfactory as he turned away from Wagner, whom he came to regard as full of empty rhetoric. In retrospect, however, the two-movement symphony may be seen to have a strength and purpose of its own, even if it did not lead Szymanowski further in that musical direction.

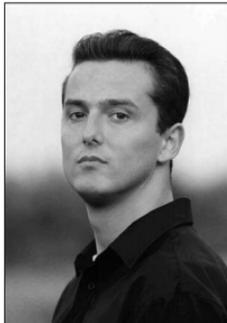
The *Symphonic Concertante* or *Fourth Symphony* was first performed in Poznań in the autumn of 1932, the year of its completion. According to Szymanowski's

own notes on the work the first movement is in a form similar to sonata form, its general mood serene, almost merry. The second movement offers a broad melody for flute solo and a violin solo with piano accompaniment. There is a great *crescendo* and the music grows quieter with the re-appearance of the theme from the first movement, leading directly to the last movement, in the rhythm of an *oberek*, a traditional round-dance, and analogous to the rondo in form, in the character of a very lively sometimes orgiastic dance. The finale also includes a short central episode for the piano, a kind of mazurek. He describes the work as nearly a concerto, except at the beginning of the second movement, where the piano plays an accompanying rôle, with many passages for solo instruments and generally a very Polish character. It might be added that the form used and the nature of the solo part gives the work a neo-Baroque character that suggests comparison with Stravinsky.

The *Study in B flat minor*, originally for piano, needs no comment. It has always enjoyed wide popularity, its debt to Chopin apparent and its melodic appeal immediate, as Paderewski found. Szymanowski was to regret the popularity of the piece, remarking to Fitelberg, who orchestrated the present version, that it was bad luck for a composer to have written his ninth symphony so early in life.

Keith Anderson

Jan Krzysztof Broja



Jan Krzysztof Broja was born in Warsaw in 1972 and is a prizewinner of international competitions in Vilnius, Hanau, (1989), Brunswick (1991), Bucharest (1995) and Pasadena (2002). He studied music in Frankfurt, Hanover and Warsaw, and shortly after his success in Vilnius in 1999 made his international debut at the Great Hall of the Tchaikovsky Conservatory, Moscow. Subsequent seasons took him to the greatest concert halls of Eastern Europe, in Russia, Ukraine, Lithuania, Yugoslavia and Poland. His Warsaw Philharmonic recital in the 2003 season was given the highest critical acclaim and since then he has been a frequent guest at the National Philharmonic in Warsaw. Other notable appearances include festivals in Ravello, Bratislava, and the Kremlin Music Festival in Moscow, and in 2005 he was a jury member at the XXI International Piano Festival in Bucaramanga, Colombia. Jan Krzysztof Broja enjoys a busy schedule as a soloist in Poland and abroad, occasionally performing with Andrzej Bauer, one of the foremost European cellists. He collaborated as a musical consultant in the production of Roman Polanski's Academy Award winning film *The Pianist*. Further concert tours have taken him to the United Kingdom, Paris and the Americas.

Ewa Marczyk



Photo: Artist's archives

Concertmaster of the Warsaw Philharmonic Orchestra, Ewa Marczyk graduated from the Warsaw Music Academy in 1975 as a pupil of Tadeusz Wroński. She then went on to study in Paris with Jean Fournier. In 1977 she joined the Warsaw Philharmonic Orchestra where she has served as leader since 1980. She has performed the solo parts of numerous symphonic works, including Richard Strauss's *Ein Heldenleben* and Rimsky-Korsakov's *Scheherazade*. From 1977 to 1983 she was also leader of the Warsaw Philharmonic Chamber Orchestra with which she toured all over the world. Since 1986 she has worked with the Polish Piano Quartet, with which she performs and records on a regular basis.

Warsaw Philharmonic Orchestra: The National Philharmonic of Poland



The first performance of the Warsaw Philharmonic Orchestra took place on 5th November 1901 in the newly opened Philharmonic Hall under the artistic director and principal conductor, Emil Młynarski. The soloist was the world-renowned pianist, composer and future statesman Ignacy Jan Paderewski, and the programme included Paderewski's *Piano Concerto in A minor* and works of other Polish composers, Chopin, Moniuszko, Noskowski, Stojowski and Zeleński. In the succeeding years the orchestra won a high reputation, collaborating with leading conductors and soloists, until the outbreak of war in 1939, the destruction of the Philharmonic Hall and the loss of 39 of its 71 players. Resuming activity after the war, the orchestra was conducted by Straszynski and Panufnik, and in January 1950 Witold

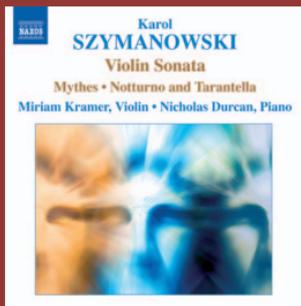
Rowicki was appointed director and principal conductor, organizing a new ensemble under difficult conditions. In 1955 the rebuilt Philharmonic Hall was re-opened, with a large hall of over a thousand seats and a 433-seat hall for chamber music, recognised as the National Philharmonic of Poland. Subsequent conductors included Bohdan Wodiczko, Arnold Reizler and Stanisław Skrowaczewski, and in 1958 Witold Rowicki was again appointed artistic director and principal conductor, a post he held until 1977, when he was succeeded by Kazimierz Kord, who served until the end of the centenary celebrations in 2001. In 2002 Antoni Wit became general and artistic director of the Warsaw Philharmonic – The National Orchestra and Choir of Poland. The orchestra has toured widely abroad, in addition to its busy schedule at home in symphony concerts, chamber concerts, educational work and other activities. It now has a complement of 112 players.

Antoni Wit

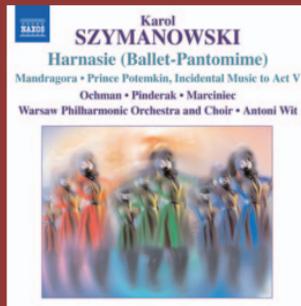


Antoni Wit, one of the most highly regarded Polish conductors, studied conducting with Henryk Czyż and composition with Krzysztof Penderecki at the Academy of Music in Kraków, subsequently continuing his studies with Nadia Boulanger in Paris. He also graduated in law at the Jagiellonian University in Kraków. Immediately after completing his studies he was engaged as an assistant at the Warsaw Philharmonic Orchestra by Witold Rowicki and was later appointed conductor of the Poznań Philharmonic. He collaborated with the Warsaw Grand Theatre, and from 1964 to 1977 was artistic director of the Pomeranian Philharmonic, before his appointment as director of the Polish Radio and Television Orchestra and Chorus in Kraków. From 1983 to 2000 he was the director of the National Polish Radio Symphony Orchestra in Katowice, and from 1987 to 1994 he was the chief conductor and then first guest conductor of the Orquesta Filarmónica de Gran Canaria. In 2002 he became General and Artistic Director of the Warsaw Philharmonic Orchestra. His international career has brought engagements with major orchestras throughout Europe, the Americas and the Near and Far East. He has made nearly a hundred records, including an acclaimed release for Naxos of the piano concertos of Prokofiev, awarded the *Diapason d'Or* and *Grand Prix du Disque de la Nouvelle Académie du Disque*. In January 2002 his recording of the *Turangalila Symphony* by Olivier Messiaen (Naxos 8.554478-79) was awarded the Cannes Classical Award at *Midem Classic* 2002. Antoni Wit is a professor at the F. Chopin Academy of Music in Warsaw.

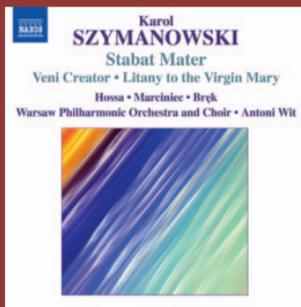
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Although Szymanowski later dubbed his *First Symphony* a “contrapuntal-harmonic-orchestral monster” and disavowed the influence of Wagner, Reger and Richard Strauss (also evident in the opulent *Concert Overture*), it is an astonishingly powerful work by a composer only in his mid-20s and still enraptures a century after its première. He described his *Fourth Symphony* as “nearly a concerto” owing to the piano’s prominent rôle, its highly-charged Neo-baroque character inviting comparison with Stravinsky. Szymanowski’s Symphonies Nos. 2 and 3 gained *Gramophone* Editor’s Choice and 5 STARS for these “deliriously sensual scores” from *ClassicFM* (8.570721).



Karol SZYMANOWSKI

(1882-1937)

Symphonies Nos. 1 and 4

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|---|---|-------|--|-------|
| 1 | Concert Overture,
Op. 12 | 13:52 | Symphony No. 4 ‘Symphonie
Concertante’, Op. 60 ² | 28:03 |
| | Symphony No. 1
in F minor, Op. 15 ¹ | 18:40 | 4 Moderato – Tempo comodo | 11:26 |
| 2 | [Allegro moderato] | 9:58 | 5 Andante molto sostenuto | 9:37 |
| 3 | Finale: Allegretto con
moto grazioso | 8:42 | 6 Allegro non troppo,
ma agitato ed ansioso | 7:00 |
| | | | 7 Study in B flat minor, Op. 4,
No. 3 (orch. Grzegorz
Fitelberg) | 6:43 |

Jan Krzysztof Broja, Piano ²

Ewa Marczyk, Violin solo ^{1,2} • Marek Marczyk, Viola solo ^{1,2}

Warsaw Philharmonic Orchestra • Antoni Wit

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