

of the *Turangalila Symphony* by Olivier Messiaen (8.554478-79) was awarded the Cannes Classical Award at MIDEM Classic 2002. In 2004 he received the Classical Internet Award. He has completed for Naxos a CD series of Szymanowski's symphonic and large-scale vocal-instrumental works, each rated among 'discs of the month' by *Gramophone* and *BBC Music Magazine*. He also received the Record Academy Award 2005 of Japanese music magazine *Record Geijutsu* for Penderecki's *Polish Requiem* (Naxos), and four Fryderyk Awards of the Polish Phonographic Academy. He has received six Grammy nominations for Penderecki's *St Luke Passion* – 2004 (8.557149), *A Polish Requiem* – 2005 (8.557386-87), *Seven Gates of Jerusalem* – 2007 (8.557766), *Utrenja* – 2009 (8.572031) and Karol Szymanowski's *Stabat Mater* – 2008 (8.570724) and Symphonies No. 1 and 4 – 2009 (8.570722). In 2010 Antoni Wit won the annual award of the Karol Szymanowski Foundation for his promotion of the music of Szymanowski in his Naxos recordings. Antoni Wit is professor at the Fryderyk Chopin University of Music in Warsaw.

#### **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, with the world-renowned pianist, composer and future statesman Ignacy Jan Paderewski as soloist in a programme that included Paderewski's *Piano Concerto in A minor* and works of other Polish composers, Chopin, Moniuszko, Noskowski, Stojowski and Zeleński. The orchestra achieved considerable success until the outbreak of war in 1939, with 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 Straszyński 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 hall for chamber music, recognised as the National Philharmonic of Poland. Subsequent conductors included Bohdan Wodiczko, Arnold Rezler 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, serving 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 (Europe, both Americas, Japan, Australia), in addition to its busy schedule at home in symphony concerts, chamber concerts, educational work and other activities. It now has a complement of 110 players. Recordings include works by Polish composers, Paderewski, Wieniawski, Karłowicz, Szymanowski, Lutosławski, Penderecki and Kilar, and by foreign composers, with acclaimed interpretations of works by Mahler and Richard Strauss. Their releases have won many prestigious awards, including six Grammy nominations.



8.572487

NAXOS

## Mieczysław KARŁOWICZ

### ‘Rebirth’ Symphony, Op. 7 Bianca da Molena, Op. 6

Warsaw Philharmonic Orchestra  
Antoni Wit

## Mieczysław Karłowicz (1876–1909) Symphony in E minor, Op. 7, 'Rebirth' • Bianca da Molena, Op. 6

Although he left a mere handful of compositions at the time of his death, in an avalanche while skiing in the Tatra Mountains, Mieczysław Karłowicz today ranks high among the composers who constitute the 'Young Poland' generation of musicians, whose most famous figure is Karol Szymanowski. Born into a wealthy academic family at Wiszniew (in what is now Lithuania), he initially trained as a violinist but, after his arrival in Berlin, where he studied from 1895 to 1901 with Henryk Urban (an ardent admirer of Richard Strauss) as well as having informal tuition with members from the Philharmonic orchestra, he turned increasingly to composition. Several sets of songs and piano pieces represent his earliest published work (further chamber music was almost certainly destroyed during the bombing of Warsaw in 1939), but the *Serenade for Strings* already demonstrates no mean grasp of larger musical forms, an ability which was further consolidated by incidental music for Jozafat Nowinski's drama *The White Dove*, the *Rebirth Symphony* whose relatively compact design is pointedly overlaid with an ambitious conceptual programme, and the *Violin Concerto* which was his last overtly abstract composition.

The remainder of Karłowicz's all too brief career was spent first in Warsaw, where he was active as first a member, then director, of the Music Society and the leader of its orchestra, then, after further study in Leipzig with Arthur Nikisch, in Zakopane, where he pursued his other interests of walking, cycling, photography and skiing. His music from these later years consists of a series (albeit not intended as such) of six symphonic poems that evince a strong attraction to the pantheistic and existential tendencies found in such philosophers as Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, along with the attributes of solitude and an emotional pivoting between fervent affirmation and stark despair which are a natural corollary to such thinking [the first, second and fifth of these symphonic poems are recorded on Naxos 8.570295, while the third, fourth and sixth of the sequence are on 8.570452].

The most ambitious in length of all his works, the '*Rebirth*' *Symphony in E minor* was most likely started

towards the end of Karłowicz's period of study in Berlin, but completed in 1903 after his return to Warsaw. Its première in Berlin on 21st March (with that of the *Violin Concerto* [Naxos 8.572274]) was followed by a performance in Lwów, for which the composer furnished a lengthy programme that freely intermingles the philosophical and the autobiographical in its heady evocation of the soul's spiritual journey from tragedy to triumph. Tchaikovsky's *Fifth Symphony* stands behind the overall tonal progression from E minor to E major, while that work's less specific concern with the machinations and the eventual overcoming of fate may also have been an influence.

The first movement opens with pensive music for strings and woodwind over a halting accompaniment in lower strings. This gradually grows in expressive power until it reaches a brief climax of jagged brass chords, subsiding to trumpet fanfares and woodwind asides. The main portion now commences with an agitated and rhythmically tense theme for brass and upper strings, which itself makes way for a calmer and more conciliatory theme on woodwind then strings, the initial theme returning in a brusque and purposeful codetta. The composer marks this exposition to be repeated (which it is on the present recording), after which an allusion to the introduction over fateful timpani rolls presages a brief but eventful development featuring a version of the second theme which is scored for divided strings and a climactic recall of the opening music. A modified reprise now follows, woodwind again entrusted with the second theme, before the coda brings with it a stormy and unresolved conclusion. The second movement opens hesitantly, but doubts are allayed by an easeful melody which emerges on solo cello then woodwind, before becoming more impassioned on strings. A plaintive theme, heard initially on solo clarinet, darkens the mood such that the music grows restless with ominous brass fanfares, but these are decisively dispelled and the main theme returns on full strings as the music heads towards an expansive climax and on, despite fleeting allusions to the secondary theme, to its radiant close.

The third movement is a lively scherzo whose

rhythmically agile theme makes for an animated interplay between wind and strings in some of the work's most resourceful scoring. In contrast, the trio centres on a lilting theme for the upper strings and which builds to a glowing climax. Some deft rhythmic modulation re-introduces the scherzo music, but this is cut short by an ominous transition to the finale. The fourth movement opens with aspiring brass figures, leading to a confident theme on strings that sets the tone for most of what follows. A more lyrical second theme is given first to the oboe before being heard more impulsively on the strings prior to a resolute codetta. A brass chorale, which relates back to the work's slow introduction, sounds nobly forth as it draws in the whole orchestra, but is cut off to leave reminiscences of the ominous transition into the finale. Once again, however, the confident theme takes hold and a modified reprise ensues, with the lyrical theme on strings from the outset, before a stealthy build-up brings a return of the aspiring fanfares then, over portentous-sounding timpani, an affirmative restatement of the chorale followed by a brief though decisive closing gesture.

In its approach to form and expression, the music for *Bianca da Molena* (The White Dove) is even more indicative of future developments. Nowinski's drama may quickly have been forgotten, but Karłowicz's music was

well received when heard at a concert in Berlin on 14th April 1900. The *Prologue* starts in an arresting fashion with swirling strings and woodwind, leading to an eloquent theme on brass that finds contrast with a subdued theme for woodwind then divided strings. Dying down, the music then emerges with re-gathered force for an extensive development of the ideas heard thus far and culminates in the heightened reappearance of the (no longer) subdued theme, now resplendent on brass and strings. Further intensive discussion of the material brings a dramatic descent in strings followed by a gradual build-up, over a reiteration of the first theme's underlying rhythm on timpani, to a fateful transformation of the first theme. From here the music subsides, only for the second theme to return transformed as a beatific postlude that sees the piece through to its serene close. The *Intermezzo* begins atmospherically with an undulating motion on strings, against which woodwind and horns intone a pensive theme that takes on greater expressive breadth after the strings have entered. This moves towards a restrained yet affecting climax, after which, woodwind lead into what is perhaps the most untroubled conclusion to be found in any of the composer's orchestral works.

Richard Whitehouse

## 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 1974 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 1977 to 1983. From 1983 to 2000 he was managing and artistic director of the National Polish Radio Symphony Orchestra in Katowice, and from 1987 to 1992 he was the chief conductor and then first guest conductor of the Orquesta Filarmónica de Gran Canaria. In 2002 he became managing 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 over 180 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

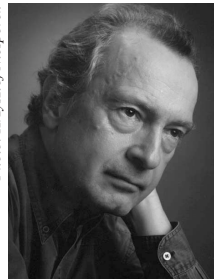


Photo: Krzysztof Niesporak