

RGG – Szymanowski (2013)

Written by bluesever

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*01. Etude Op. 4 No. 3 02. Prelude Op. 1 No. 3 03. Grey Swans 04. Mazurka Op. 50 No. 5
05. Countup 06. Variations in B Minor Op.10 07. Prelude Op. 1 No. 8 08. Series 09. Prelude
Op.1 No.1 10. Mazurka Op.50 No.1 11. Mazurka Op.50 No.7 12. Lausanne 13. Psalm IV*
Łukasz Ojdana - piano Maciej Garbowski - bass Krzysztof Gradziuk - drums

This is the sixth album by the exquisite Polish Jazz piano trio RGG, and their first release following the changeover of their piano player, with Lukasz Ojdana replacing the founding member Przemyslaw Raminiak. For a piano trio the replacement of the pianist is equivalent more or less to a heart transplant in a human body, which is of course a tremendous upheaval. The fact that such transition not only is possible, but is eventually successful is nothing short of a miracle. Bassist Maciej Garbowski and drummer Krzysztof Gradziuk should be congratulated for going through this experience unspoiled and unshaken in their team spirit. The fact that the trio chose to retain its name (rather than changing it to OGG for example) is a most welcome sign of respect towards their departed colleague and the will to continue the splendid tradition they created so far, a fine and very rare example of camaraderie winning over ego.

But the drama surrounding this album does not end with the personnel change; for the first time the trio decided to pay homage to a Classical composer, in this case the Polish early-20th Century pianist / composer Karol Szymanowski. Szymanowski, a brilliant early-modernist / impressionist, who combined Polish Folklore and modernist compositional tools, is a rather neglected figure on the Polish scene, which is a great shame. Therefore the fact that RGG decided to make him the center of their new recording fits perfectly their non-conformist approach towards music. Of the thirteen tracks on this album, nine are interpretations of compositions by Szymanowski, three are composed by the bassist and the remaining one is a group composition. The original compositions are of course "in spiritu" inspired by the great composer. Following decades of Polish Jazz musicians obsessively interpreting the music of Frederic Chopin, it's truly refreshing to hear some musicians turning the attention to other great Polish composers, like Szymanowski in this case.

What remains unchanged is the trio's basic approach to music, full of freedom, beautiful silence between the notes, total dedication and amazing intellectual command, which takes the music to lofty peaks. Ideally, the listener of this music should be familiar, at least to some extent, with the original music by Szymanowski, but being realistic, this will be the case only in reference to very few listeners. But this music is so powerful and stunning, that it completely stands on its own as well. RGG managed again to create a sonic universe of its own, which keeps the tradition of the original music at its core alive a Century later, transforming it to contemporary set of aesthetic values and parameters. Perhaps this recording will inspire new listeners to discover Szymanowski, after listening to this gorgeous music: a double winner after all.

It makes no sense to compare Ojdana with Raminiak and additionally it means absolutely nothing as far as the music is concerned; the only thing that matters is the fact that he became an organic part of the trio, fitting ideally with his two partners and cooperating with them symbiotically and creatively. And most importantly the level of talent of virtuosity displayed by RGG was not lessened by an iota, which firmly places them at the very top of Jazz piano trios not only in their native Poland, but worldwide, easily! I've already written extensively about the talents of Messrs. Garbowski & Gradziuk, suffice to say they are without a doubt closer to Euterpe than most others I happened to have the pleasure to listen to.

The trio maintains the tradition of recording their albums at the now legendary Studio Tokarnia, under the auspices of the resident sound wizard Jan Smoczynski. The result is nothing short of spectacular, which stands its ground to any ECM recording, again with ease. Therefore for all intents and purposes this album is equivalent to a Keith Jarrett trio album on ECM; it simply does not get any better than this. --- Adam Baruch, polish-jazz.blogspot.com

Na krążku znajduje się 13 utworów - dziewięć z nich to parafrazy dzieł Karola Szymanowskiego, trzy to kompozycje Maćka Garbowskiego, inspirowane twórczością mistrza oraz kolektywna improwizacja całego trio.

Album "Szymanowski" to muzyka programowa i kontemplacyjna, skierowana nie tylko do znawców twórczości Karola Szymanowskiego, lecz do każdego, kto jest w stanie odnaleźć piękno melodii i harmonii bez poddawania materiału naukowym analizom. Unikatowość tego

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nagrania polega na ujęciu utworów w taki sposób, aby nadal można było mówić o muzyce Szymanowskiego, mimo zmiany aparatu wykonawczego i indywidualnej koncepcji realizacji utworów. Poszczególne utwory są splecione nicią kompozycyjną RGG, tworząc jednolity obraz wielowarstwowego dzieła.

Od 2013 roku trio występuje w nowym składzie. Miejsce pianisty Przemka Raminiaka zajął Łukasz Ojdana. Na kontrabasie gra Maciej Garbowski, na perkusji Krzysztof Gradziuk. ---
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