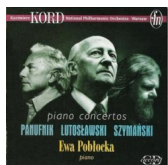


Panufnik - Lutoslawski - Szymanski: Piano Concertos (1998)

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Panufnik - Lutoslawski - Szymanski: Piano Concertos (1998)



Andrzej Panufnik

Piano Concerto 1961

1. *Entrata*

2. *Molto tranquillo – attacca*

3. *Molto agitato*

Witold Lutosławski

Piano Concerto 1987

1. *ca 110 – attacca*

2. *Presto – attacca*

3. *ca 85 – attacca*

4 *ca 84*

Pawel Szymański

Piano Concerto 1994

Ewa Poblocka - piano

National Philharmonic Orchestra - Warsaw

Kazimierz Kord

After successful but isolated attempts in the genre by Chopin, Paderewski, and Szymanowski (to be precise, the latter only wrote a Sinfonia Concertante), the piano concerto seems to be back in favor among Polish composers. Andrzej Panufnik's Concerto, dated 1961, pays a heavy tribute to Bartók through the percussive solo writing, the energetic gestures of the Entrata, and the drawn out night music of the central movement. A virtuoso Toccata-like finale adds a bit of jazzy wit. Oddly enough, its quasi-mechanical rhythmic patterns seem to conjure the ghost of Ravel's G major concerto finale. Those familiar with Witold Lutoslawski's luscious orchestral style will find themselves in well-known territory with his Piano Concerto (1987), written for

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Krystian Zimerman. Articulated in four medium-sized movements, the piece builds up dramatic tension by the repetition of short atonal cells full of rhythmic energy. A sharply colored but flexible orchestration constantly supports the bold solo piano part. This work may not be the ultimate emotional listening experience, but its mystery and the efficient writing are nonetheless fascinating.

Less known than his two colleagues, Pawel Szymanski (born 1954) opens his Piano Concerto (1994) with a kind of "deconstructed" polyphony "à la Bach", something like an extravagant cross between Nancarrow's Studies for player piano and Busoni's Fantasia nach J.S. Bach. Throughout the piece, strange instrumental effects and dislocated rhythms separated by abysmal pauses create an atmosphere of dreamy, sometimes spooky suspense. It looks like Szymanski is trying to turn the piano concerto tradition upside down, and he's quite successful at it. The performances are ideally powerful and accurate, and so is the recording. [3/12/2000]
--Luca Sabbatini, Classics Today

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