Stanislaw Moniuszko – Halka (Dondajewski) [1991]



1. Part I 2. Part II Halka - Andrea Trauboth Jontek - Wieslaw Ochman Sofia - Petra Wolf Janusz - Jörn W.Wilsing Stolnik - Dieter Schweikart Dziemba - Piotr Liszkowski Wiesniak - Mircea Nedelescu Dudarz - Thomas Schürmann Mieczyslaw Dondajewski – conductor Sendesaal des SFB, Berlin 26-Jan-1991 Radio broadcast. Deutsch gesungen / Sung in german

Stanisław Moniuszko, the composer, conductor and teacher, was born in Ubiel near Minsk on 5 May 1819 and died on 4 June 1872 in Warsaw.Following a short spell of home education with his mother, Elzbieta, Moniuszko started to learn piano with August Freyer in Warsaw in 1827, to continue with Dominik Stefanowicz in Minsk from 1830. While staying in Vilnius in 1839, Moniuszko met his wife-to-be, Aleksandra Mueller. In 1837 Moniuszko left for Berlin, where he took private instruction in harmony, counterpoint, instrumentation and conducting with Carl Friedrich Rungenhagen, the director of the Singakademie Music Society. Meanwhile Moniuszko practised, conducted choirs, accompanied singers, studied the great operatic, oratorio and symphonic repertoires and investigated the pre-staging process as well as conducting technique, and took part in rehearsals carried out by Rungehagen and by Gaspar Spontini, who visited Berlin at the time.

Having spent three years in Berlin, Moniuszko returned to Poland in 1840 to marry Aleksandra Mueller and settle down in Vilnius, where he took the organist's position at St John's. Moniuszko contributed greatly to the local revival of music. Though short-lived, the choir which he had put together at St John's, supported by an ad hoc assembled orchestra, performed Mozart's "Requiem" as well as Haydn's Creation of the World, parts of Haydn's oratories and Mendelssohns's St Paul. There were also orchestral performances of works by Spontini, Mendelssohn and Beethoven. In the meantime Moniuszko travelled to St Petersburg to introduce its audiences to his own compositions. They were received with acclaim and had favourable reviews. The trips helped Moniuszko to make friends with Russia's leading composers and musicians, including Mikhail Glinka, Alexandr Dargomyzhskiy, Cesar Cui, and

Alexandr Sierov.

In 1848 Vilnius saw the premiere staging of the first, two-act version of Moniuszko's opera "Halka", conducted by the composer himself. Six years later, with the help of Achilles Bonoldi, Moniuszko established St Cecilia's Society, its amateur members giving two public concerts twice a year. Following the triumphant Warsaw premiere of the new, four-act version of "Halka" on 1st January 1858, Moniuszko embarked on a artistic trip to Germany and France to return and be appointed the first conducted of the Polish Opera at the Teatr Wielki (Grand Theatre) in Warsaw on 1st August 1858. The same year Moniuszko put on his one-act opera "Flis", followed by the stagings of all of his subsequent operas over his fifteen-year term. Moniuszko's conducting projects focused almost exclusively on his own compositions, the key few exceptions being "HaydÉe" and "Le Cheval de Bronze", the operas by Daniel François Esprit Auber. From time to time he would also conduct Warsaw church choirs, such as when he staged Felix Mendelssohns's oratorio "Elijah" in a protestant temple, and would appear as a conductor at the annual composer concerts.

In 1862 Moniuszko went to Paris again, hoping to have one of his operas staged there, but it never happened. The difficult political situation at the time and after the 1863 January Rising was not conducive to practising art, and Moniuszko's composing pace slowed down. However, the 1865 staging of his opera "Straszny dwor" was received enthusiastically, its success comaparable to that of "Halka"'s. The year before the composer launched a series of lectures in harmony, counterpoint and composition, and led a choir group at the Institute of Music of the Fryderyk Chopin Academy of Music in Warsaw. Among Moniuszko's students were Zygmunt Noskowski and Henryk Jarecki.

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