

**Ewa Podles - A Treasury of Polish Songs (1998)**



FRYDERYK CHOPIN (1810-1849): 1. *Życzenie* (*The maiden's wish*) 2. *Piosnka litewska* (*Lithuanian song*) 3. *Melodia - Z gór, gdzie dźwigali...* (*Melody, from the mountains, where they carried...*) 4. *Śliczny chłopiec* (*The cute boy*) 5. *Moja pieszczotka* (*My little darling*) 6. *Leci liście z drzewa* (*The leaves are falling from the tree*)

STANISŁAW MONIUSZKO (1819-1872):

7. *Przędka* (*Old spinner's song*) 8. *Powiedzcie mi* (*Tell me*) 9. *Ruta* (*Rue*) 10. *Pieśń wieczorna* (*Evening song*) 11. *Prząśniczka* (*The spinner*)

MIECZYŚŁAW KARŁOWICZ (1876-1909):

12. *Zasmuconej* (*To a grieving maiden*) Op.1, nr 1 13. *Rdzawe liście...* (*Rust-coloured leaves...*) 14. *Na śniegu* (*In the snow*) Op.1, nr 3 15. *Śpi w blaskach nocy* (*Sleeps in the light of night*) Op.3, nr 5 16. *Skąd pierwsze gwiazdy* (*Early stars*) Op.1, nr 3 17. *I zamiast słońc...* (*I have no sun*) Op.3 nr 2 18. *Pod jaworem* (*Under the sycamore*) 19. *Z nową wiosną* (*With the new spring*)

KAROL SZYMANOWSKI (1882-1938):

20. *Święty Boże* (*Holy God*) 21. *Jestem i płaczę* (*I am here and weep*) 22. *Błogosławioną niech będzie ta chwila* (*Blessed be the moment*)

WITOLD LUTOSŁAWSKI (1913-1994):

23. *Rycerze* (*Knights*) 24. *Morze* (*The sea*) 25. *Wiatr* (*The wind*) 26. *Zima* (*The winter*), 27. *Dzwony cerkiewne* (*Eastern Church bells*)

Ewa Podles – alto Ewa Poblocka – piano

This rich and rewarding recital makes out a good case for better knowledge of Polish song in the West. Even Chopin only makes the rarest appearances in recitals, though *The Wish* is as charming as any of his piano waltzes, *The Handsome Lad* has a splendid cut to it and *The Leaves are Falling* transcends such captivating salon or genre pieces with a song of real strength. It is a pity he wrote so few (a mere 19). Moniuszko, on the other hand, poured songs out, some 360 in number. In the 12 volumes of his so-called *Home Songbook* he had in mind not the concert performer but the domestic musician, though some of the songs are quite demanding and certainly gain from the impressive performances they receive here. *Tell me* is guided by the strong melody, as is the charming *Evening Song*; *Rue* is rather more extended,

wry and with a folk tang. It might have been interesting to have a wider selection, and perhaps fewer from Mieczysław Karłowicz, who on the present showing has an agreeable sense of melody but less individuality, and, moreover, was perpetuating a style that by the last decade of the nineteenth century (when these were all written), had grown old-fashioned. Lutosławski's Five Poems have a delicacy and sensitivity that set them in the tradition of his predecessors; they are beautifully composed miniatures of sea and wind and winter and church bells. The exception in this recital are the Three Songs by Szymanowski, powerful and tormented tableaux that receive what appear to be exemplary performances here.

I put this tentatively, lacking as I do any knowledge of the Polish language and warned by a long and extremely helpful insert-note by Bohdan Pociąg of the intricate connections between music and poetry (parallel translations help, but are not the same thing). Ewa Podles pulls out all her considerable stops here. Writing of her Russian recital in May 1995, AB found her idiosyncratic, and very fairly added, 'Taking risks in her interpretations, she earns her rewards.' Much helped by a brilliantly sympathetic accompanist in Ewa Poblocka, one who is able to storm the heights in Szymanowski and touch off the wit and charm of the lighter songs with a captivating lilt, she seems to me to earn them well here, too.' --- John Warrack, gramophone.co.uk

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