

NAXOS

GÓRECKI

Concerto-Cantata

**Little Requiem for a Certain Polka • Three Dances
Harpsichord Concerto (piano version)**

Anna Górecka, Piano • Carol Wincenc, Flute

Warsaw Philharmonic Orchestra • Antoni Wit



Henryk Mikołaj Górecki (1933-2010): Little Requiem for a Certain Polka Concerto-Cantata • Harpsichord Concerto (piano version) • Three Dances

Henryk Mikołaj Górecki was born on 6th December 1933 in Czernica, Silesia. He studied music at the High School (now Academy) of Music in Katowice, graduating with distinction in 1960 from the class of Bolesław Szabelski (who had been taught by Szymanowski). Górecki gave his debut concert as a composer in 1958 in Katowice, which in turn led to hearings at the Warsaw Autumn International Festival of Contemporary Music that included his *First Symphony* in 1959 and *Scontri* (Collisions) in 1960 – the former piece going on to win first prize at the 1961 Biennial Festival of Youth in Paris. If the style of Górecki's compositions in his earlier years owed a considerable amount to Bartók and Stravinsky, by the start of the following decade it had been supplemented by elements of post-Webern expressionism as well as a selective use of free serial technique.

Górecki's 1960s output centres on the cyclical works *Genesis I-III* (1962-3) and *La Musiquette I-IV* (1967-70), both of which are scored for chamber ensembles. While *Genesis* adheres to the Polish 'expressive sonorism', simplification of material is evident in *Les Musiquettes*. These cycles were separated by the orchestral *Refrain*, for which Górecki received third prize at the UNESCO International Rostrum of Composers in Paris in 1967. *Refrain* can now be seen as a turning-point in his musical aesthetic – the use of imposing blocks of sound with textural clusters, and above all the reverberating 'space' around the musical activity, heralds such pieces as the *Second Symphony 'Copernicus'* (1963) [Naxos 8.555375] and the *Third Symphony 'Symphony of Sorrowful Songs'* (1976) [8.550822], which was belatedly to accord the composer international status during the 1990s.

Despite this work's success Górecki continued steadfastly on the highly personal route he had chosen after having composed it, as if reluctant to capitalize on his unexpected fame. Then he had waited over three years before producing his next large-scale work, the choral *Beatus Vir* (1979) [8.555375] written to mark the first return visit to Poland of Pope Jean Paul II. This was

followed by the monumental *Miserere* for unaccompanied voices (1981), written in support of the Polish trade union Solidarity, while chamber music was represented by such pieces as *Lerchenmusik* (1986) and three string quartets composed for the Kronos Quartet between 1988 and 1995. Górecki's later years were clouded by illness and largely given over to shorter choral and instrumental pieces, though he was working on a *Fourth Symphony* at the time of his death in Katowice on 10th November 2010.

Of the pieces featured on this disc, the first two are the largest ensemble works from the composer's final creative phase. Scored for piano and thirteen instruments, *Kleines Requiem für eine Polka* (1993) was written for the Schoenberg Ensemble and its conductor Reinbert de Leeuw, and was first performed by them in Amsterdam on 12th June 1993. Musically it continues on from *Lerchenmusik* in its juxtaposing a wide range of moods within a cohesive overall form that yet threatens to break apart given the unequivocal nature of the actual material.

The first movement opens with bells and piano in gentle alternation, the latter gradually outlining a phrase that is joined by a keening melody on violin as the expressive range increases. The full forces suddenly break out in an intense unison chant before vanishing almost as rapidly to leave things much as before – piano and bells remaining to bring about a hushed yet uneasy close over static chords on the strings. The second movement bursts in with a jagged unison idea on brass and strings, punctuated by strident piano chords, which gradually mutates in its rhythm as it evolves. The intensity subsides to leave solo clarinet and horn sounding plaintively over fateful piano chords, to which strings respond with quietly unexpected affirmation. The third movement now takes off with a polka idea that is unfolded aggressively by the full ensemble, punctuated only by a brief silence before resuming its hectic course. A further extended pause, then the fourth movement begins with a subdued chorale-like theme on the strings, its progress marked off by bells, to which brass add their solemn

presence as the work heads to a rapt close with just the quietest of discords on piano then bells to recall earlier events.

Completed barely a year before, *Concerto-Cantata* (1992) for flute and orchestra was given a first hearing in Amsterdam on 28th November 1992 by Carol Wincenc with the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra and Eri Klas. The hybrid title is explained by its movements each having a title reminiscent of those found in the 'sacred concerts' from the high Baroque era, though the musical content is determinedly of its own time.

The *Recitativo* consists of a sombre unaccompanied soliloquy rendered in the flute's lowest register, which gradually opens-out in expression before suddenly being confronted by stark phrases from unison brass and strings. From here the *Arioso* commences with the soloist pursuing its inward melodic line over static chords on lower strings and harp, growing in expressive intensity until the *Concertino* is launched with a capricious exchange between flute and strings. These then merge into a hectic dance-like idea with wind and percussion much in evidence, alternating with a more equable theme before those earlier exchanges are resumed and the music builds to a violent climax on full orchestra. This subsides quickly, however, then the *Arioso e corale* finale begins with a literal return to the second movement's rapt vein of melancholy, before the soloist leads hesitantly into a halting motion on strings which brings about a final though not necessarily serene catharsis.

The *Concerto for Harpsichord/Piano and Strings* (1980) was written for harpsichordist Elżbieta Chojnacka, who gave the première in Katowice on 2nd March 1980 with the Polish Radio Symphony and Stanisław Wisłócki. Since then its subversive take on musical post-modernism has provoked delight and dismay in equal measure.

The first movement opens with a coursing motion for unison strings with piano providing a no less intensive accompaniment. This continues on its purposeful course with just the occasional pause until reaching a held cadential chord from which the second movement sets off with a vaunting idea for the soloist against mock-Classical figuration on strings. This duly takes in passages of contrasting harmonic profile without disrupting the prevailing rhythmic motion, prior to a sudden stalling on strings and a final nonchalant gesture from piano.

The *Three Dances* (1973) constitute the earliest work featured here, receiving their première in Rybnik on 24th November 1973 by the Rybnik Philharmonic Symphony and Antoni Szafranek. The result is one of Górecki's most immediate and approachable pieces: a suite of highly contrasting dances that makes virtuoso use of a large orchestra and is the nearest in spirit that the composer came to the folk-inflected directness of his older contemporary Wojciech Kilar. That such a piece has not achieved greater popularity is the more surprising.

The first dance is launched with a striding theme for full orchestra whose rhythmic motion has a Stravinskian impetus, enhanced by chordal gestures from the brass. The second dance opens in the greatest contrast with undulating lower strings supporting an affecting melody on violins, which pursues a ruminative course as the dynamics increase then the music resumes its earlier mood on the way to a questioning conclusion. The third dance starts with a lively bassoon idea over tramping strings, taken on by clarinet then oboe and flute, before full strings and woodwind enter the fray and the theme duly emerges in vibrant splendour on full orchestra.

Richard Whitehouse

Anna Górecka



In 1991 Anna Górecka graduated from the Academy of Music in Katowice, where she studied with Andrzej Jasiński, continuing for two further years at the Trossingen Staatliche Hochschule für Musik under Wiktor Merzhanow. She has to her credit success in various competitions, including in Senigallia, at the Brahms Competition in Hamburg and at the Polish Piano Festival. Her career has brought concert tours to Japan and the United States, and engagements throughout Europe. She has a wide repertoire and has taken part in the first performances of works by many contemporary composers, reserving a special place in her repertoire for the compositions by her father Henryk Mikołaj Górecki, including works written for her.

Carol Wincenc



First Prize Winner of the Walter W. Naumburg Solo Flute Competition, GRAMMY® Award-winner, and 2011 Lifetime Achievement Award recipient from the National Flute Association, Carol Wincenc celebrated her 2010 Ruby Anniversary with enthusiastic reviews from *The New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *New Yorker*, and *Performance Today*. She has given premières of concertos written for her by Lukas Foss, Henryk Górecki, Joan Tower, Paul Schoenfield, Jake Heggie, Peter Schickele, Roberto Sierra and Tobias Picker. She is a prolific recording artist. Her Telarc recording of Pulitzer Prize winner Christopher Rouse's *Flute Concerto* with the Houston Symphony won the coveted Diapason d'Or award while her Naxos recording of Griffes's *Poem for flute and orchestra* (8.559164), with her hometown orchestra, the Buffalo Philharmonic, conducted by JoAnn Falletta, received a *Gramophone* 'Editor's Choice'. Her debut album on Music Masters, on which she is accompanied by Andrés Schiff, was cited by *Stereo Review* as a 'Recording of Special Merit'. She has appeared as concerto soloist with leading orchestras throughout the United States and performed at music festivals in Aldeburgh, Budapest, Frankfurt, Santa Fe, Spoleto, Banff, Sarasota and elsewhere. She continues teaching at both Stony Brook University and her alma mater, The Juilliard School.

Warsaw Philharmonic Orchestra – The National Orchestra 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 Żeleński. 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 Rezier 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), 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, Penderecki, Lutosławski, Górecki 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.

Antoni Wit



Photo: Krzysztof Niespornek

Antoni Wit, one of the most highly regarded Polish conductors, studied conducting with Henryk Czyz at the Academy of Music in Kraków. He then continued his musical 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. After winning second prize in the International Herbert von Karajan Conducting Competition in Berlin (1971), he became an assistant conductor to the patron of that competition. Later he was appointed conductor of the Poznań Philharmonic, 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 and Choir. Since the season 2010/11, he has been first guest conductor with the Orquesta Sinfónica de Navarra in Pamplona. His international career has brought engagements with major orchestras throughout Europe, the Americas and the Near and Far East. He has made over 200 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 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 CD magazines (*Gramophone*, *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* in 2004 (8.557149), *A Polish Requiem* in 2005 (8.557386-87), *Seven Gates of Jerusalem* in 2007 (8.557766), *Utrinja* in 2009 (8.572031) and Karol Szymanowski's *Stabat Mater* in 2008 (8.570724) and *Symphonies Nos. 1 and 4* in 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.

These four works, written between 1973 and 1993, fully reflect Górecki's expressive variety. The *Little Requiem for a Certain Polka*, for piano and thirteen instruments, combines a wide range of moods. The *Concerto-Cantata*, which received its world première from the soloist on this recording, alternates a moving vein of melancholy with a charged, violent energy. The radical, energetic *Harpichord Concerto* is heard here in the version for piano, performed by the composer's daughter. The *Three Dances* are hugely approachable and full of exciting contrast.

 WARSAW
PHILHARMONIC

Henryk
GÓRĘCKI
(1933-2010)

Małe requiem dla pewnej polki (Little Requiem for a Certain Polka), Op. 66 (1993)*	25:55	7 III. Concertino: Allegro	5:02
1 I. Tranquillo	10:29	8 IV. Arioso e corale: Lento – Tranquillo cantabile – Dolce	6:09
2 II. Allegro impetuoso – Marcatissimo	6:17	Harpichord Concerto, Op. 40 (version for piano and orchestra) (1980)*	7:46
3 III. Allegro – Deciso assai	2:43	9 I. Allegro molto	3:46
4 IV. Adagio cantabile	6:26	10 II. Vivace marcatissimo	4:00
Concerto-Cantata, Op. 65 (1992) (World Première Recording)† *	21:26	Three Dances, Op. 34 (1973)	14:26
5 I. Recitativo: Lento (quasi molto lento)	5:39	11 No. 1. Presto, marcatissimo	3:13
6 II. Arioso: Lento assai tranquillissimo – Cantabile – Dolce	4:36	12 No. 2. Andante cantabile – Tranquillo	5:15
		13 No. 3. Presto	5:57

Anna Górecka, Piano* • Carol Wincenc, Flute†

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