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About the new "Songs of a Fairy-Tale Princess"

Performed to this day, the orchestral version of the three song cycle makes a graceful and CONVINCING TRIPTYCH, but for those familiar with the entire cycle, it is only an IMPRESSION

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As a collector of musical memorabilia, bizarre objects that bear witness to the passage of time and events connected with the history of Polish music that are of keen interest to me, I wander the boundless reaches of the internet in search of new antiquarian resources that appear every now and then. The reproduced postcard is a testimony of admiration for the figure of Karol Szymanowski. However, a brief description of the work of the author of *Harnasie*, placed under the photograph, arouses surprise: "His Polishness is musically stylized, fussy, aristocratic and far from folkloric". This is a huge surprise, as this description in a way contradicts the last, national period of the composer's work. After all, *Harnasie* and *Symphony No. 4* are precisely "folkloric", "non-aristocratic", perhaps "unfussy" — emblematic of the last period of Szymanowski's life (after all, the postcard was published shortly after his death). If I wanted to find works matching the postcard's commentary, I would have to look in his earlier works like *King Roger*, *Masques*, or perhaps *Metopes*? What about songs for voice and orchestra?

I will lift the veil of secrecy: the above reflection is due to the new version of Szymanowski's Six Songs of a Fairy-Tale Princess Op. 31, fully orchestrated by Bruno Dozza and soon to be published by PWM.

It will be a great event for all admirers of Szymanowski's music. The songs as a whole cycle are known in the piano version, the orchestral version was created in 1933 and concerns only three works (out of six). They were first performed by Ewa Bandrowska-Turska under Grzegorz Fitelberg. I always wonder why composers often make their choice by looking at their own works from the past, why Szymanowski did not give us an orchestration of the whole cycle? One thing is certain, the cycle of three songs performed to this day in the orchestral version forms a neat and convincing triptych: *Lonely Moon* and *The Nightingale* captivate with their delicately exalted beauty with oriental coloring, while *Dance*, which closes the whole, adds vigor, rhythmic contour and creates the impression of a finale. For those familiar with the cycle, this is only an impression, as one always awaits the interlude *Golden Slippers*, the

rocking and seductive *Song of the Wave* and, finally, *The Feast* (reminiscent of the bacchanalia of *King Roger*).

To put it bluntly and unequivocally, Bruno Dozza has succeeded in doing the impossible; he has managed to enter so deeply into the spirit of Szymanowski's capricious instrumentation of the period that the boundaries between the instrumentations of the *Songs'* author and Dozza practically vanish into thin air like the trills of the eponymous Princess. The power of the newly created instrumentation is evidenced by, among other things, the artful use of the piano (which does not imitate the original), the accompaniment of the vocal voice by wind instruments (the soft lines of the flute and clarinets in *Golden Slippers*), and the sophisticated use of percussion (*piatto sospeso*, *triangolo*, *campanelli*). The impression of fluency of narration (especially in *Song of the Wave*) and its three-dimensionality is deepened by the superb use of *divisi* in the part of the string quintet, its numerous solos being a direct reference to Szymanowski's instrumentation. *The Feast*, being the finale, demonstrates Bruno Dozza's in-depth studies of the score of *King Roger*, the spicy trumpet and snare drum rhythms finding their (perfect) source there.

As a listener and performer, I am convinced that new instrumentations of Szymanowski's compositions make a lot of sense – at this point I am reminded of the premiere of the orchestration of the *Agave* cantata in Piotr Moss's and Malcolm Hill's versions (on Radio Poland, 2007).

Uninstrumented works, unfinished by the author, are most deserving of creative efforts aimed at bringing them back to the listeners. Bruno Dozza's work is an example of this. I fervently hope that soon we will be able to listen to the complete cycle of *Songs of a Fairy-Tale Princess* in a new orchestration that will become “traditional and obligatory” over the years. And the description from a pre-war postcard will no longer be so surprising...

*The world premiere of *Song of a Fairy-Tale Princess, Op. 31*, orchestrated by Karol Szymanowski and Bruno Dozza, took place on April 30 at the National Forum of Music in Wrocław. The performers were: Iwona Sobotka — soprano and NFM Wrocław Philharmonic conducted by Giancarlo Guerrero.*