

CD REVIEW



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Szymon KURAN (1955-2005)

Post mortem (1981) [3:45] ¹

Um nóttina (2000) [5:14] ¹

Requiem (2000) [34:13] ²

● Joanna Hajduk (violin) ¹

Marek Wroński (violin) ²

Tomasz Kania (electric guitar) ³

Urszula Janik (flute) ³

Barbara Skoczyńska (percussion) ³

Krzysztof Jedlewski (percussion) ³

Urszula Borzym (maiden voice) ³

Chór Kameralny Collegium Musicum

Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego/ Andrzej

Borzym and Iwona Januszkiewicz-Rębowska

(chorus masters) ²

Chór Chłopięco-Meński Gregorianum/Berenika

Jozajtis and Leszek Kubiak (chorus masters) ³

Orkiestra Państwowej Szkoły Muzycznej II st.

nr 3 w Warszawie im. Grażyny Bacewicz/

Andrzej Borzym (conductor)

rec. Church of Wszystkich Świętych, Warsaw,

25 April 2007, live, 12 April 2007 (Requiem)

● **ACTE PRÉALABLE APO161** [43:20]

Szymon Kuran died at forty-nine. He was a violinist, principally active as orchestral leader both in his native Poland and later in Iceland, but also a soloist. He gave the Icelandic premieres of both the Panufnik Concerto and Szymanowski's First. Interested in jazz he formed a "string jazz" quartet, which recorded and was much admired. And he also composed. He was made Artist of the Year in Reykjavik in 1994.

These are the merest essential details of a regrettably short life. This disc is also on the short side at forty-three minutes but it does present Kuran's biggest and most important classical composition, his Requiem. And now it serves that melancholy duty for its composer. It was written between 1994 and 2000. The text is in Latin – there's a short interpolated prayer in Polish – and it's written for three choirs (children's, male and female), strings, percussion, and an eclectic array of other instruments including electric guitar. There's a strong role for the solo violin, a role that the composer would have taken himself on disc had not fate decreed otherwise.

The Requiem is a most approachable, tonal work. Perhaps a near reference point, though I stress "near," is Arvo Pärt – the deep Russian sounding basses in the opening movement certainly reinforce the impression. It's a work of humility and humanity as well, with bells used warmly and the solo violin sweetly in the *Dies irae* – mostly in reverie, and with folk influenced melodic lines. In the *Rex tremendae* we hear some terse and stern percussive statements and implacable men's voices but the consoling *Lacrimosa* – all women's voices and coiling smoke violin - acts as balm. There are hints of Brahms's own German Requiem in

the *Offertorium* and in the percussion-dominated *Sanctus-Benedictus* it's more a case of Pärt once more and maybe Gorecki. The girl's solo voice in the *Oratio II* is joined by the once-more-active solo violin; the work ends in consoling quietude.

Post mortem is a brief work, lasting less than four minutes, written for solo violin and string orchestra and dedicated to the victims of the Gdansk attacks in 1981. A serene Bach Chorale-like theme is assailed by skittering high strings but there is a measure of resolution at the end. *Um nóttina* was written in the same year as the Requiem. It's rapt, otherworldly, reflective and refined – a sort of stripped down Vasks.

This is a noble salute to Kuran. The Requiem was recorded live whilst the companion works were taped in the studio. All the performances are impressively assured and the notes are sympathetic. There is no jazz here, for those who may know Kuran from his quartet work. His classical compositions are serious but gently affirmative.

Jonathan Woolf

Read more: http://www.musicweb-international.com/classrev/2008/Jan08/Kuran_apo161.htm