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EWA PODLEŚ LIVE WITH POZNAŃ PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

Ewa PODLEŚ - contralto
POZNAŃ PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA
Łukasz BOROWICZ - conductor

Christoph Willibald GLUCK (ARR. Richard WAGNER) : OVERTURE TO IPHIGÉNIE EN AULIDE

Christoph Willibald GLUCK : ORPHEUS' RECITATIVE AND ARIA MALHEUREUX, QUE J'AI FAIT - J'AI PERDU MON EURYDICE FROM ORPHÉE ET EURYDICE

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Gioacchino ROSSINI : CYRUS' ARIA CIRO INFELICE FROM CIRO IN BABILONIA

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Gioacchino ROSSINI : ISABELLA'S ARIA CRUDA SORTE FROM L'ITALIANA IN ALGERI

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Up to this date, the most accurate and concise definition of the contralto: a hermaphrodite-voice, a union of both a male and a female voice in one, belongs to Théophile Gautier. It's low, chest register sounds almost like a baritone and it's high, head register like a soprano. Indeed it was stated many times by nineteenth century music critics, and with a great deal of amusement I might add, that a contralto can perform the parts of both Romeo and Juliet in the same performance.

The combination of those two registers results in a natural, three octave scale. Another feature specific to a contralto voice, is a natural agility which with professional training becomes an overwhelming coloratura.

In general, a contralto is nowadays considered to be the lowest female voice. It can possibly be compared to a double bass or a contra bassoon. This is not true however. Contralto voice comprises like three female voices in one: the low register is like an alto, medium like a mezzo-soprano and high like a soprano. In the low register, a contralto descends as low as an alto, however while an alto is short (without the outstanding high register) and heavy (no agility or ability to sing coloratura), a contralto can raise very high and sing very fast. That is reason why it could be a mistake to call singers like Kathleen Ferrier, Marian Anderson or Maureen Forrester contraltos. They all were typical altos with wonderful low register but without agility or high register. In my opinion, Marilyn Horne was without doubt a true contralto. I also think of myself as a classic contralto. I have a natural low register and just as a natural ability to sing coloraturas, my scale ranges for more than three octaves.

A contralto is a very rare and unique voice. In the beginning of a career contraltos often choose works from the soprano repertoire, later to step away from them because they feel most at home in the low register. Even though they can raise to the top of the scale, occasionally difficult to reach even for sopranos, they do it more as a short visit rather than a permanent place of residence.

It seems obvious that a contralto voice, including my own cannot sound the same in both registers. The difference in sound is both evident and natural and as such, should not be the source of negative comments or strong criticism. A professional music critic should be well aware of the fact that one cannot connect a chest and head register in an invisible way just as one cannot erase the difference between an male and a female voice. And besides, who is to say that a contralto should unify those registers at all cost? In the name of what correctness or doctrine should I temper my voice and give up its natural sounds (at times baritone or soprano like)? I am not only not bothered by this contrast but rather fascinated by it. I find it extremely sexy. Rather than criticizing, one should admire the particular beauty of this phenomenon, especially since the sound of a chest register of a true contralto makes a very strong impression, almost impossible to achieve for other voice types. There is one condition however – the chest register should be used with good taste and only when it is appropriate, otherwise it sounds more like a roar of a cow on a pasture. Singing low sounds with the use of the chest voice is called for and required or expected in pants roles such as Calbo, Tancredi, Arsace or Ciro, and female "witch" roles such as Ulrica and Azucena. In my opinion it is unfounded and in bad taste in such roles as for instance Cenerentola or Rosina.

I am truly sad that for obvious reasons there are no recordings of contraltos of the past, just like there are no recordings of Paganini, Liszt or Chopin's playing. The reports of contemporary chroniclers, reviewers and students are in fact useless, polluted by a subjective approach and an inability to put in words the esthetic impressions. Reviews seem to be the only source of a valuable historic opinion, according to them, contraltos sung with "two voices". This information seems to be very important and true.

It could be for marketing reasons that many contemporary singers call themselves contraltos, even though in fact they are not. Their singing is very far from the aforementioned characteristics of a true contralto: two very different registers, a three octave scale and agility. It could be that the term contralto is simply fashionable, en vogue, the name itself sounds very attractive and every singer who can sing a bit in the low register begins to call herself a contralto right away.

Ewa PODLEŚ – contralto

With her distinctive, dramatic voice of staggering range, agility and amplitude, Ewa Podleś is universally regarded as the most authentic contralto of her generation. This view is shared by music critics of leading periodicals and newspapers (*Opera International, Orpheus, Gramophone, The New York Times, The Washington Post, The San Francisco Examiner, Opera News, The Financial Times*).

Since her Metropolitan Opera debut in 1984, she has been in a select group of artists who appear regularly in the most prestigious opera houses and concert halls including La Scala, the Metropolitan, San Francisco Opera, Covent Garden, Théâtre du Châtelet, Deutsche Oper Berlin, Teatro Linceo, Teatro Real, Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, London's Wigmore Hall, Théâtre des Champs Elysées and the National Philharmonic in Warsaw. Thanks to her unique vocal

abilities, her extensive opera and concert repertoire spans music from the Baroque to the present.

In the last few seasons Ewa Podleś has appeared as La Cieca in Ponchielli's *La Gioconda* at the Met and Barcelona, Klytamnestra in Richard Strauss's *Elektra* in Warsaw, Toronto, Nice and Katowice, Azucena in Verdi's *Il Trovatore* in Toronto and Poznań, Cesare in Handel's *Giulio Cesare* in San Diego, Ciro in Rossini's *Cyrus in Babylon* at the Caramoor Festival in New York and at the Pesaro Festival, Tancredi in Rossini's *Tancredi* in Warsaw, Madrid and Boston, Isabella in Rossini's *L'Italiana in Algeri* in Gdańsk, the Marquise de Birkenfeld in Donizetti's *La fille du regiment* at Covent Garden, in Houston, San Diego and Madrid, the Countess in Puccini's *Suor Angelica* in San Francisco, Mistress Quickly in Verdi's *Falstaff* in Bilbao and Munich, the Countess in Tchaikovsky's *The Queen of Spades* in Barcelona and Monte Carlo, Madame de la Haltière in Massenet's *Cendrillon* in Paris, London, Barcelona, Luxembourg and Saint-Etienne, Jeřibaba in Dvořák's *Rusalka* in Monte Carlo, and Erda in Wagner's *Das Rheingold*.

She has also given widely-acclaimed recitals in New York's Avery Fisher Hall, London's Wigmore Hall, in Berlin, Hanover, Madrid, Barcelona, Moscow and Quebec, festivals in Pesaro, San Sebastian and Schleswig-Holstein as well as many other music centres in Poland, Europe and America.

The artist's numerous honours include the Dora Mavor Moore Award from the Toronto Alliance for the Performing Arts (for the title role in Handel's *Giulio Cesare* in Toronto), the Andrzej Hiolski Award (for the title role in Rossini's *Tancredi* at the National Opera in Warsaw, the Gloria Artis Gold Medal, the Golden Spectre for lifetime artistic achievements, the award of American music critics (1997), the Kościuszko Foundation Prize (2005) for outstanding services for the promotion of Polish and American cultures, the Medal of Merit for the promotion of Russian culture from the Russian President (2006) and the Gold Medal of the Foundation of Gran Teatre del Liceu in Barcelona (2013). She also received the Commander's Cross of the Order of Reborn Poland.

Many of her recordings have received prestigious awards, including Diapason d'Or, Orphée d'Or, Preis der Deutschen Schallplatten Kritik, Grand Prix de l'Académie Française du Disque, and the Fryderyk Prize in Poland. In recent years, four DVDs starring Ewa Podleś have appeared: Ponchielli's *La Gioconda* in Barcelona (La Cieca), Massenet's *Cendrillon* at Covent Garden (Madame de la Haltière), Tchaikovsky's *The Queen of Spades* in Barcelona (The Countess) and a recital of Russian songs (recorded in Warsaw with Garrick Ohlsson). The singer's biography by the French author Brigitte Cormier, entitled *Ewa Podleś – Contralto assoluto*, has been published in a Polish translation by the Polish Music Publishers PWM.

Foreign music critics contributing to Classic FM Magazine have included Ewa Podleś among ten best mezzos of the first decade of the twenty-first century, while Operaarts.com named her one of 100 operatic legends of the last half-century. In 2010, the Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain in Geneva displayed for several months an oil painting by Nina Childress portraying Ewa Podleś as Rinaldo in the Met production.

Ewa Podleś is a native of Warsaw and resides in the city. She studied vocal performance with Alina Bolechowska at the Fryderyk Chopin Academy of Music in Warsaw. She is the winner of many international competitions, including the Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow.

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POZNAŃ PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

During the opening concert, which was held on 10 November 1947, the Poznań Philharmonic Orchestra performed under the baton of its first conductor, Stanisław Wiślocki. He was later succeeded by Jerzy Katlewicz, Robert Satanowski, Witold Krzemieński, Zdzisław Szostak, Renard Czajkowski, Wojciech Rajski, Wojciech Michniewski, Andrzej Borejko, Mirosław Jacek Błaszczyk, José Maria Florêncio and Grzegorz Nowak.

In the 2007/2008 artistic season, Marek Pijarowski became the Chief Conductor of the Poznań Philharmonic Orchestra. Łukasz Borowicz is the ensemble's First Guest Conductor.

One of the most famous and recognised Polish symphonic ensembles, the orchestra performs at major music centres at home and abroad. It has toured almost all European countries, and performed at several leading international music festivals, incl. the Roma Europa-Villa Medici, Kissinger Sommer, Ankara Sanat Festivali, Festwochen in Herrenhausen, Bregenzer Frühling, Dresdner Musikfestspiele, and Choriner Musiksommer, Ludwig van Beethoven Easter Festival.

The Orchestra accompanied participants of the first post-war edition of the Chopin Competition in Warsaw; since 1952, it has regularly played with the finalists of International Henryk Wieniawski Violin Competitions in Poznań. The main symphonic ensemble of the *Poznańska Wiosna Muzyczna*, (*Poznań Music Spring*), it also participates in the *Warszawska Jesień* (*Warsaw Autumn*) *Wrocław Cantans* festivals in Warsaw and Wrocław respectively, and often gives première performances of contemporary pieces by Polish and foreign composers. An important event in the orchestra's history was its performance for Pope John Paul II at the Vatican.

The Orchestra has performed with such illustrious conductors, as Hermann Abendroth, Roberto Benzi, Walerian Bierdajew, Henryk Czyż, Marco Erede, János Ferencsik, George Georgescu, Zdzisław Górczyński, Christopher Hogwood, Jacek Kasprzyk, Kazimierz Kord, Jan Krenz, Zygmunt Latoszewski, Zdeněk Mácal, Jerzy Maksymiuk, Sir Neville Marriner, Jérémie Rhorer, Witold Rowicki, Ainārs Rubiķis Jerzy Semkow, Stanisław Skro-waczewski, Václav Smetáček, Antoni Wit, Bohdan Wo-diczko, Carlo Zecchi, as well as with outstanding soloists: Martha Argerich, Piotr Beczała, Rafał Blechacz, Gábor Boldoczki, Pavol Breslik, Sarah Chang, Andrzej Dobber, Helen Donath, Wojciech Drabowicz, Jean Fournier, Malcolm Frager, Alexander Gavrylyuk, Monique Haas, Ida Haendel, Andrzej Hiolski, Philippe Jaroussky, Sumi Jo, Ryszard Karczykowski, Antonina Kawecka, Olga Kern, Joanna Kozłowska, Gidon Kremer, Konstanty Andrzej Kulka, Aleksandra Kurzak, Sergei Leiferkus, Julia Lezhneva, Christian Lindberg, Bernard Ładysz, Adam Makowicz, Witold Małcużyński, Annick Massis, Albrecht Mayer, Francesco Meli, Johannes Moser, Leszek Możdżer, Victoria Mullova, Sergei Nakariakov, Wiesław Ochman, Garrick Ohlsson, Dawid i Igor Ojstrachowie, Gerhrad Oppitz, Emmanuel Pahud, Ewa Podleś, Maurizio Pollini, Samuel Ramey, Vadim Repin, Rugierro Ricci, Światosław Richter, Mścisław Rostropowicz, Artur Rubinstein, Alexandra Soumm, Göran Söllscher, Akiko Suwanai, Henryk Szeryng, Stefania Toczyska, Simon Trpčeski, Arcadi Volodos, Wanda Wiłkomirska, Narciso Yepes, Krystian Zimerman.

The ensemble has made numerous recordings of symphonic, opera, and ballet pieces for radio, television, and record companies (Sony Classical, Polmusic, Wichtel Records, Polskie Nagrania, Muza, Largo Records, Dux, CD Accord, Naxos). Famous throughout Europe for its excellent acoustic properties and exquisite Neo-Renaissance architecture, as well as capable of seating almost one thousand listeners, the Auditorium of Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań is the concert venue of the Poznań Philharmonic Orchestra.

Łukasz BOROWICZ – conductor

Appointed Chief Guest Conductor of the Poznań Philharmonic Orchestra in 2006, since 2007 he has been the Artistic Director of the Polish Radio Symphony Orchestra. Born in Warsaw in 1977, he studied with Bogusław Madey at the Fryderyk Chopin Music Academy in Warsaw where he received a doctorate in conducting under Antoni Wit. He was Assistant Conductor to Kazimierz Kord at the Polish National Opera (2005-2006), to Antoni Wit at the Warsaw Philharmonic (2002-2005) and to Iván Fischer at the Budapest Festival Orchestra (2000-2001).

Holder of several grants from the Polish Ministry of Culture, he is a prizewinner of four conducting competitions: in Trento (1999), Athens (2000), Porto (2002) and Bamberg (2004). His awards include the "Passport" Prize of *Polityka* magazine (2008), The Coryphaeus of Polish Music Award (2011), and the Cyprian Kamil Norwid Prize (2013).

Łukasz Borowicz has conducted numerous orchestras, incl. the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, the Konzerthausorchester Berlin, the Komische Oper Berlin, the NDR Radiophilharmonie Hannover, the MDR Sinfonieorchester Leipzig, the Düsseldorfer Symphoniker, the Wiener Volksoper, the Orchestra of the Opera in Marseilles, the I Pomeriggi Musicali of Milan, the Prague Symphony Orchestra FOK, as well as the majority of Polish symphony orchestras.

He made his operatic debut with Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's *Don Giovanni* at the Polish National Opera in Warsaw followed by *Orfeo ed Euridice* by Christoph Willibald Gluck, as well as ballets: *The Rite of Spring* by Igor Stravinsky and *Midsummer's Night Dream* by Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy and György Ligeti. Further operatic productions include: *Don Giovanni*, *Eugène Onegin* by Pyotr Tchaikovsky and Stanisław Moniuszko's *Halka* at the Cracow Opera, *Die Zauberflöte* by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, *Rusalka* by Antonin Dvořák, *Bluebeard's Castle* by Bela Bartók and *Dido and Aeneas* by Henry Purcell at the Wielki Theatre in Łódź, and Karol Szymanowski's *King Roger* at ABAO Opera in Bilbao. He has conducted ballet performances at the Polish National Opera (*Swan Lake* by Pyotr Tchaikovsky, and *La Bayadere* by Ludwig Minkus). His discography includes recordings with such Polish and international opera stars, as Ewa Podleś, Piotr Beczała, Mariusz Kwiecień or Samuel Ramey.

His work with the Polish Radio Symphony Orchestra includes recordings and concert performances of numerous forgotten Polish operas, while collaborations with the Polish Radio at the Ludwig van Beethoven Easter Festival in Warsaw have produced such works as Luigi Cherubini's *Lodoïska*, Louis Spohr's *Berggeist*, Carl Maria Weber's *Euryanthe*, Gaetano Donizetti's *Maria Padilla*, Italo Montemezzi's *L'amore dei tre re*, and *Simon Boccanegra* by Giuseppe Verdi.

In November 2010 he conducted the concert performance of Giuseppe Verdi's *Giovanna d'Arco* at the Poznań Philharmonic, whose recording was released by the Polskie Nagrania. A CD of the 2009 concert of the World Opera Stars series given by the illustrious Italian tenor Francesco Meli and the Poznań Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Łukasz Borowicz at the University Auditorium in Poznań was released by the Polskie Nagrania and the Poznań Philharmonic in 2012.

Łukasz Borowicz has recorded the Complete Violin Concertos by Grażyna Bacewicz for Chandos (with Joanna Kurkowicz) and the Complete Symphonic Works by Andrzej Panufnik (with the Polish Radio Symphony Orchestra and the Konzerthausorchester Berlin) for CPO. His collaboration with Piotr Beczała on the Deutsche Grammophon recording of *Heart's Delight* (with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra) has been certified Gold in Poland.

His recordings have been awarded the BBC Music Orchestral Choice (2010), BBC Music Opera Choice (2013), two Diapason d'Or Prizes (2010 and 2013), two Fryderyk Chopin Prizes (2007 and 2010). They were also nominated for the Midem Classical Awards (2008) and the Preis der Deutschen Schallplattenkritik (2009).