Karol Szymanowski Biography

Karol Szymanowski

The following sections of this BookRags Literature Study Guide is offprint from Gale's For Students Series: Presenting Analysis, Context, and Criticism on Commonly Studied Works: Introduction, Author Biography, Plot Summary, Characters, Themes, Style, Historical Context, Critical Overview, Criticism and Critical Essays, Media Adaptations, Topics for Further Study, Compare & Contrast, What Do I Read Next?, For Further Study, and Sources.

(c)1998-2002; (c)2002 by Gale. Gale is an imprint of The Gale Group, Inc., a division of Thomson Learning, Inc. Gale and Design and Thomson Learning are trademarks used herein under license.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Encyclopedia of Popular Fiction: "Social Concerns", "Thematic Overview", "Techniques", "Literary Precedents", "Key Questions", "Related Titles", "Adaptations", "Related Web Sites". (c)1994-2005, by Walton Beacham.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Guide to Literature for Young Adults: "About the Author", "Overview", "Setting", "Literary Qualities", "Social Sensitivity", "Topics for Discussion", "Ideas for Reports and Papers". (c)1994-2005, by Walton Beacham.

All other sections in this Literature Study Guide are owned and copyrighted by BookRags, Inc.



Contents

Karol Szymanowski Biography.....1

Contents.....2

Biography.....3

Biography

The Polish composer Karol Szymanowski (1882-1937) treated national subjects in an original and highly effective manner.

On Oct. 6, 1882, Karol Szymanowski was born at Timoshovka in the Ukraine to a wealthy, highly cultured Polish family that encouraged his obvious musical talent. While still in his teens he wrote elegant pieces for the piano obviously inspired by Frédéric Chopin. In 1901 he entered the Warsaw Conservatory, and after graduation he went to Berlin in 1905. There he and three other young Polish composers founded a society called Young Poland in Music. In 1908 Szymanowski returned to Timoshovka. He spent the years 1912-1914 in Vienna.

Compositions of this early period are numerous piano pieces--Preludes (1901, 1905), Etudes (1902), and Variations (1901, 1904)--introduced by Artur Rubinstein in his concerts; and violin pieces--a Sonata (1904), *Romance* (1909), and *Notturn e tarantella* (1914)--introduced by Paul Kochanski. The *Love Songs of Hafiz* (1910, 1914) and the opera *Hagith* (1912-1913) reflect Szymanowski's interest in Oriental mysticism and philosophy.

Szymanowski's *Mythes* (1915) is a set of three pieces for violin and piano. The second of these, the *Fountain of Arethusa,* became his best-known and most frequently performed composition. Over a shimmering, dissonant piano part the violin soars in arabesque-filled melody. The harmonies are dissonant but are treated in the impressionist manner, not for their tension but for their color.

The Szymanowski family estate was lost in the 1917 Revolution, and the composer's affluent position changed overnight. In 1920 he went to Warsaw, where he lived until 1935.

During the 1920s Szymanowski's compositions became known to a wider audience through their inclusion in the annual programs sponsored by the International Society of Contemporary Music, and he emerged as Poland's most eminent composer. He became director of the Warsaw Conservatory in 1926. At this time Szymanowski's works began to reflect his national heritage. *Harnassie* (1926) is a ballet-opera based on Polish peasant music and traditions, similar to Igor Stravinsky's treatment of Russian folklore in *Les Noces* and Bohuslav Martinu's use of Czech themes in *Spalicek*. Szymanowski's *Stabat Mater* (1928) for solo voices, mixed chorus, and orchestra reconciles Palestrina counterpoint with Slavic melodies. A cycle of 12 songs (1930) was inspired by the folk music of the Kurpie region of Poland. Other important compositions are the Second Violin Concerto (1930) and the Symphonie Concertante for piano and orchestra (1932), both distinctly Polish in character.

Szymanowski died of tuberculosis in Lausanne, Switzerland, on March 28, 1937.