

celestial harmonies

mikalojus konstantinas Ćiurlionis
the complete piano music, vol. 2
nikolaus lahusen
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the artist

Recorded at Bavaria Studios, München, as a co-production between Celestial Harmonies and Bayerischer Rundfunk, this is volume two of the first-ever recording of the complete piano music of Mikalojus Konstantinas Ćiurlionis, performed by Nikolaus Lahusen.

Lahusen was born in Bremen, Germany, in 1960 and grew up in Mexico. His artistic development was supported by Edith Picht-Axenfeld, Christoph Eschenbach and Bruno Leonardo Gelber. Counted among the leading pianists of his generation, Lahusen has given concerts worldwide.

International radio and television stations have broadcast his concerts and recordings; his numerous recordings have been well received among music critics.

Writes Lahusen, "Ćiurlionis composed in small books, similar to keeping a diary: today a prelude, tomorrow a variation, thereafter a marzurka suddenly followed by three measures of a composition which he might have begun thirty pages earlier. Later, he adds an additional variation on a theme notated five pages earlier on. What struck me was that this was a radical example of what Ćiurlionis must have been like: following a few attempts to reach people with his music, he lost all hope of doing so. Thereafter, he composed for himself alone."

the project

Mikalojus Konstantinas Ćiurlionis was born in 1875 in the southern Lithuanian town of Varena, near Vilnius. Doubly talented, he was an artist-composer who could hear colours and see sounds and whose life was comprised of the close interaction between musical and artistic composition.

In his homeland of Lithuania, Ćiurlionis was celebrated as an exponent of musical modernism and the founder of a national school of music. Yet he was without doubt an avant-garde artist of European standing, an artistic visionary between the late Romantic and Modern ages, one of a number of creative innovators of the early 20th century, among them Skryabin, Schönberg and Ravel, all born in the same year.

Trained in Warsaw and Leipzig, he worked as a composer and painter in Warsaw, Vilnius and St. Petersburg. In the mere fifteen years prior to his untimely death in a Polish sanatorium in 1911, he produced an immense number of artistic and musical works including 200 paintings, 80 drawings and more than 270 musical compositions, about 170 of which were scored for solo piano.

This recording presents both his early and late piano compositions. His early works are finely-spun webs, often tinted with melancholy, many less than a minute long, moments immortalised like thoughts noted down in a diary. The later pieces, on the other hand, such as the piano cycle *Marios* or the *Six Preludes Op. 33* evoke their own special tonal world through the use of unusual, disturbing melodies.

"When planning this CD," writes Nikolaus Lahusen "my practical considerations were centered around how the numerous short pieces could be grouped together in a meaningful way. On the first volume of works I set apart the four- to six-movement cycles by interspersing fugues among them, thus causing the listener to concentrate on the polyphonic structures of the many-layered preludes. On this CD I decided to pull groups of short early compositions together into small suites according to harmonic criteria and to the similarity of their dancelike characteristics."

