

MAZURKA

Gjertrud's Gypsy Orchestra (Norway)
Nils Henrik Asheim (piano, Norway)

A re-interpretation of Frédéric Chopin's Mazurkas



The Mazurkas occupy a special position in Frédéric Chopin's work. They have the distinct rhythm and the edgy tunes of folk music, clothed in raw, beautiful and radical harmony. This inspired composer and pianist Nils Henrik Asheim to read Chopin's music through the sound of a Gypsy orchestra - taking the classical music back towards the dance floor, so to speak.

This may seem like a daring approach. But actually, there is already a clash of cultures in the Mazurkas. Often, a folk-like main part is followed by a more salon-like, classical interlude. Chopin sometimes dissolves his own tune by transposing it chromatically or leaving the end of phrases somehow unfinished, creating a magic and mystical atmosphere – rather the opposite of what you would expect from dance music.

In Asheim and the Gjertrud Gypsy Orchestra's re-interpretation, the original piano versions drift in and out of the music, into full-blood Gypsy or Balkan-sounding parts, exploring the expressive potential of Chopin's beautiful tunes. On the other end of the scale, the music dives into intriguing, experimental contemporary sound effects sometimes sounding like a film score.

The project was elaborated through a collaboration of more than one year between the Gypsy Orchestra and Asheim, and had its premiere for a sold-out house at the prestigious Bergen International Festival in May 2009.

In 2010, 200 years had passed since the birth of Frédéric Chopin. The

“Mazurka” project is a tribute to him, one of the greatest musical geniuses ever, maybe the greatest composer of piano music. In september 2010 the CD “Mazurka – Remaking Chopin” was released. It was recorded in the 19th century mansion of Ulefoss in East Norway, on a historic Collard & Collard piano from Chopin’s own time. The CD won Norwegian Grammy and received excellent reviews in Norwegian newspapers.

The program is colorful and varied, and therefore suitable for many types of audiences. It can be presented in different lengths – The full version is a concert of 45+40 minutes.

THE MUSICIANS

Nils Henrik Asheim (pianist, composer)

Nils Henrik Asheim is known as one of Norway’s most prolific and acclaimed composers, also as an innovative improviser on the organ and piano. He appeared in public as a composer for the first time at the age of 15. In 1978 he was awarded European Broadcasting Union’s Rostrum-prize. He got his education from The National Norwegian Music Academy in Oslo and Sweelinck Conservatory, Amsterdam. His works are performed widely internationally.

Gjertrud’s Gypsy Orchestra

The Orchestra is since 1989 specializing in Eastern European Gypsy Music from Russia, Rumania and, first of all, Hungary. The group have learned the music directly from Gypsy musicians in Budapest. They have toured all Norway, appeared in radio and TV shows, in a number of festivals and released several CD’s. The Orchestra receives a grant from the Norwegian Cultural Council. The excellent Hungarian musician Ernest Bangó, known from his collaboration with Roby Lakatos, has now replaced László Rácz as the group’s cimbalom player.

Musicians of the Gypsy Orchestra:

Gjertrud Økland (violin)
Georg Reiss (clarinet, tárogató)
Tom Karlsrud (accordeon)
Pål Thorstensen (double bass)
Trond Villa (viola)
Helene Waage (cello, celtic harp)
Ernest Bangó (cimbalom)

www.gjertruds.no

www.nilshenrikasheim.no

Contact:

gjertruds@msn.com

n.h.asheim@gmail.com