

BEYOND THE MOUNTAINS: THE RECEPTION OF MONIUSZKO AND HIS 'HALKA' ABROAD

As early as 1905, more than half a century before *Halka* would first be staged in England, Stanisław Moniuszko and his most popular opera earned a mention in *The Oxford History of Music*. In a chapter devoted to the 'Development of Romantic Opera', the Leipzig-trained, London-domiciled German pianist and pedagogue Edward Dannreuther wrote, 'Moniuszko's *Halka* is the favourite Polish opera [...] The charm of the tunes keeps the work afloat. It is admirably written for the voices and admirably scored.'¹ Perceptively enough, Dannreuther was also one of the first commentators in English to mention Moniuszko, Smetana and Erkel in a single breath; many have done so since, wondering why, since it was with *The Bartered Bride* that the Czech composer's worldwide popularity was sealed early on, his Polish and Hungarian counterparts have largely remained well-kept secrets in their native lands.

Even now, from a twenty-first century perspective, Bedřich Smetana remains the only one of these three composers to be widely familiar to the average music lover outside Central and Eastern Europe. It might be argued that, as *Die verkaufte Braut*, his masterpiece became a sort of honorary German-language opera, assimilated to the extent that when performed in translation its leading characters have alternative German names. Yet Prague's geographical proximity to Vienna and other leading centres of the German-speaking musical world does not in itself explain this phenomenon (Budapest is even closer to Vienna, but Ferenc Erkel's operas have not travelled up the Danube with anything like the same regularity), nor even Smetana's upbringing in a German-speaking household, since Smetana was an ardent promoter of the Czech nationalist cause, briefly aligning himself with the revolutionaries of 1848.

The year 1848 opened musically, indeed on New Year's Day itself, with the premiere in Vilnius of the original two-act version of Moniuszko's *Halka*. But even though Moniuszko was working around this time with the Belarusian writer and social activist Vintsent Dunin-Martsinkyevich on what is generally considered to be the first Belarusian opera, *Sielanka*,² the currents in the musical air were more than simply revolutionary. Moniuszko (1819–1872) was to earn himself the title of 'father of Polish opera' in parallel with similar labels being applied in their respective countries to Smetana

1
Oxford History of Music (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1905), iv: 77.

2
In 1859, Dunin-Mart-sinkyevich would translate Mickiewicz's *Pan Tadeusz* into Belarusian, the first translation of this work into another Slavonic language, but he was prevented by the Tsarist authorities from publishing it all.

(1824–1884) and Erkel (1810–1893), as indeed before them to the ‘father of Russian music’, Mikhail Glinka (1804–1857); though all justifiable up to a point, these tags must of course be treated with latitude, since none of these composers actually pioneered their native traditions. With the exception of *The Bartered Bride*, none of these four composers’ operas is even now very familiar to audiences beyond Central and Eastern Europe. Their frequently nationalistic plots have been perhaps one barrier to wider currency, their linguistic challenges another – though less so today, given that many Russian and Czech operas at least are now accepted as part of the international repertoire.

Of Moniuszko’s two most important operas, *Halka* and *Straszny Dwór* (‘The haunted manor’), it is the first that has travelled best beyond Polish borders, to the extent that any study of Moniuszko’s reception abroad is essentially a study of *Halka*’s performance history. This has little to do with their respective musical merits. One reason for *Halka*’s easier acceptance is perhaps that, whereas *Straszny Dwór* is a celebration of ‘Old Poland’, a culture appreciated and understood best at home, *Halka*’s plot is more universal in its appeal and typical of the nineteenth-century ‘Opheliac’ trend in opera and theatre. In the century that followed, especially during the period of communist rule in Poland and elsewhere, the strongly anti-feudal themes and shadows of social inequality found in Włodzimierz Wolski’s libretto also helped to guarantee a good official reception when the opera was toured to politically aligned countries. Behind the Iron Curtain, a bare-bones version of the story – telling of how the mountain girl Halka is driven mad after the impoverished nobleman Janusz seduces and then abandons her – was sometimes used to facilitate Moniuszko’s portrayal as a revolutionary himself and a sympathiser with the humble folk. But perhaps Moniuszko was merely advocating better behaviour from the landed upper classes: unlike Daniel Auber’s celebrated *La muette de Portici*, with which it shares many similarities, *Halka* doesn’t end with the spark of revolution; it ends in conciliation.

PARTITIONING EMPIRES

How to define ‘abroad’ when speaking of Moniuszko, and when Poland’s national boundaries have changed since the composer’s lifetime? More pertinently, how to define nationality in this context when the composer was born in what is present-day Belarus and spent the first phase of his career in present-day Lithuania? The purpose of this article is to examine his reception in the wider world, but both chronologically and geographically it makes sense to begin the survey with two of the three partitioning empires – Russia and Austro-Hungary – whose cities were, unsurprisingly, among the first beyond Poland itself to hear *Halka*.

In Russia, *Halka* was first seen at the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow on 4 March 1869.³ In the years leading up to this event, Russian colleagues had taken up sometimes opposing positions, with the composer and critic Alexander Serov writing enthusiastically about the music of his close friend Moniuszko, and César Cui being an admirer too. Alexander Dargomyzhsky had cautioned against a performance of *Halka* until a Russian translation could be provided, and in the event Moscow heard the opera in a new version with words by Nikolay Kulikov. The same translation was used the following year, on 16 February 1870, when *Halka* successfully entered the repertoire of the Mariinsky Theatre in St Petersburg, conducted by Edvard Nápravnik in a lavish production starring several leading singers of the imperial stage (with Yulia Platonova in the title role), which held its place in the seasons there until 1873, notching up thirty-one performances in all. Further Moscow revivals were held in 1898 and 1904, and St Petersburg saw an Italian-language production in 1899, starring the Ukrainian soprano Salomea Krushelnytska. The opera had also reached the provincial Russian city of Ufa in 1890, and as the centenary publication *Halka: 100 Lat na scenie* records, there were many more performances in pre-revolutionary Russia, often with impressive casts.

The first truly international appearance of *Halka* had been in Prague on 28 February 1868, when the opera was conducted by Bedřich Smetana and sung in Czech.⁴ A few months later, in May 1868, Moniuszko himself appeared in Prague to conduct *Halka* during the laying of the foundation stone at the National Theatre. In 1883, just two years after the National Theatre had finally opened, *Halka* returned there, with further performances being given in 1886. A Slovenian translation by Peter Miklavc (1859–1918, one of whose pseudonyms was Podravski) was used in the first performance in Ljubljana on 15 September 1898.

The earliest-known performance in German was given in Riga in 1888 (some western Polish cities, such as Poznań and Bydgoszcz, inevitably heard it in German too). But German society had been well informed about *Halka* from the beginning: writing in the November 1858 edition of the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, no less a figure than the composer and conductor Hans von Bülow reported: ‘The opera *Halka* made a striking impression in Warsaw, full of fanatical feelings, and has honourably compensated the composer for the struggles and deprivations of many years past [...] After *Halka* he must be described as a musician with decidedly original talent who, by virtue of the earnestness of his endeavour and the soundness of his musical training – his style is always utmost neatness and steadiness – can claim honourable recognition in the world of music.’⁵ Bülow, who seems to have based his judgement on the score (piano reduction) then recently published by the Warsaw firm of Gebethner & Wolff and Senff in Leipzig, had been alerted to the work by Maria Kalergis, a patron of Polish arts and an ardent champion of Moniuszko.

3 According to Kornel Michałowski’s *Opery Polskie*, Kiev saw productions in 1862 and 1874; unsurprisingly, Polish-speaking Lwów also heard the work early on, in 1867.

4 The Czech translation was by ‘V.Š.K.’ Alfred Loewenberg, *Annals of Opera* (London: John Calder, 1978), 913.

5 Quoted in Bogusław M. Maciejewski, *Moniuszko Father Of Polish Opera* (London: Allegro Press, 1979), 78.

Also in 1858, Bülow had conducted the Polish pianist Karol Tausig (1841–1871) in his debut in Berlin, the city in which he would eventually settle during the last years of his short life. One of Liszt's favourite pupils, and also a friend of both Wagner and Brahms, he made many virtuoso piano transcriptions from the operas of the day, including a monumentally challenging *Fantasia Halka*, of around thirteen minutes' duration. Another noteworthy transcription is the *Fantazja na tematy z opery Halka*, Op. 51, by Józef Nowakowski (1800–1865), one of several such pieces this composer-pianist, a friend of Chopin's, made from Moniuszko's music. Like many of the operatic transcriptions fashionable in the nineteenth century, these would have helped in the wider dissemination of Moniuszko's voice. It has also been shown that tunes from the opera were arranged for settings of the Jewish liturgical repertoire. In particular, the example has been cited of a Hungarian rabbi in 1899 submitting a 'Klagelied über den Fall Jerusalems' to the Viennese publication *Die Neuzeit*, with the note: 'Throughout Galicia, this poem is sung to a melody from the Russian [*sic*] opera *Halka*.'⁶

Vienna heard its first *Halka* in Polish, when on 10 September 1892 the company from the Lwów (Lviv) Opera performed it under the auspices of the celebrated Internationale Ausstellung für Musik und Theaterwesen. Partly, it appears, on account of lacklustre productions, partly because the Viennese critics were craving something more modern, neither it nor *Straszny Dwór*, with which it was performed in tandem, was well received, and Moniuszko's opera did not return to the city until 1926.

SHADES OF SCHOENBERG

When *Halka* was heard again in Vienna it was at the Volksoper on 29 April 1926 in a new German translation by the Brno-born Walther Klein (1882–1961).⁷ As well as being a composer who had studied with Schoenberg, Klein was the translator of many works into German. The cast of this Volksoper production included no less a singer than the young Anny Konetzni as Zofia. Almost thirty years later, in 1965, the Volksoper would get another production of *Halka*, this time with the production team led by two distinguished Polish artists, the conductor Jan Krenz and director Aleksander Bardini.

Another German translation by another Schoenberg disciple was used in the first German staging of *Halka*, in Hamburg on 14 May 1935. Felix Greissle (1894–1982), a close friend and collaborator well known for his transcriptions of Schoenberg's music, became the great composer's son-in-law when he married Schoenberg's daughter Gertrude in 1921. A conductor who also worked for the publishers Universal Edition (who published *Halka* in 1936), he developed a reputation for translating East European opera librettos into German; his translation of *Jenůfa* was said to have helped to obscure

⁶ Magdalena Dziadek's programme note for *Halka*, Chopin and his Europe, 24 August 2018, 24.

⁷ A refugee from Nazism, Klein would die at San Anselmo in California.

Max Brod's Jewish roots, but in fact Greissle and his wife emigrated to the United States in 1938. The Hamburg *Halka* was conducted by Hans Schmidt-Isserstedt (with a young Hans Hotter in the role of Janusz). Greissle's translation was also used when *Halka* opened at the Staatsoper in Berlin on 15 November 1936, in a production starring Tiana Lemnitz in the title role and conducted by Leo Blech.

EUROPE-WIDE TRACKS

Spurred on in part by the failure of *Halka* at the famous 1892 Vienna exhibition, plans were made by Emil Młynarski to conduct the opera at the Universal Exhibition in Paris in 1900; alas, nothing came of that. He was not the first to have tried: Moniuszko's loyal friend Józef Wieniawski had also attempted to promote his compositions in France, but in the event *Halka* did not receive its French premiere until 5 March 1957, in Toulouse, when it was sung in French (in a translation by Freddy Ledain and Marcel Désiron) but produced by Polish artists, the stage director Jerzy Merunowicz and conductor Mieczysław Mierzejewski. The mixed French-Polish cast was led by Maryse Patris in the title role. Maryse Patris had also sung *Halka* a few months earlier, in December 1956, when the opera was first heard in Belgium, in Liège, conducted by Marcel Désiron.

Italy got to see *Halka* half a century earlier: on 5 November 1905 the opera reached the Teatro Lirico in Milan, where it was heard in the Italian translation by Moniuszko's baritone friend Giuseppe Achille Bonoldi (1821–71),⁸ who created the role of Jontek in the original two-act version of *Halka* in Vilnius in 1848 (Jontek became a tenor in the expanded four-act version that launched Moniuszko's career in Warsaw in 1858). It was conducted by Rodolfo Ferrari, and Irena Bohuss-Hellerowa took the title role.

Halka reached several corners of Europe between the two world wars. It was sung in Bulgarian in Sofia (3 May 1921), and in Croatian in Zagreb (20 March 1934). The nineteenth-century tradition of *Halka* in Prague endured well into the twentieth century, with the opera returning to both the capital of the now independent Czechoslovakia as well as to Bratislava in 1928, and to Brno in 1929. In Switzerland, it was seen in Bern in 1933 and Zurich in 1935. Tallinn staged it in 1938, and *Halka* had already crossed the Baltic to Helsinki in 1936 (it returned there in Leon Schiller's Warsaw production in 1953).

The problem of finding a universal audience for Moniuszko's opera had been addressed as early as August 1912, when a translation into Esperanto was performed in Kraków. It is unclear if this translation was ever heard again, but it was the work of a Polish pioneer in the development of Esperanto as a literary language, Antoni Grabowski (1857–1921). A chemical engineer by training, early on he translated Goethe and Pushkin into Esperanto, and he followed up

⁸ Unearthed for performance at the 2018 Chopin and His Europe festival, conducted by Fabio Biondi.

Halka by working on a translation of Mickiewicz's *Pan Tadeusz* during the First World War.

UNDER COMMUNISM

As noted above, the plot of *Halka* played well from a political point of view under communist regimes. One of the first major post-war productions was in no less a high temple of opera than the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow, conducted by Kirill Kondrashin and directed by Boris Pokrovsky, opening on 6 November 1949. Happily, it led to the first complete recording of the opera, released by Melodiya in 1952. If the Russian brass sound heavy-footed in the mazurka, the cast is a fine one, led by Natalya Sokolova. The line-up also includes Irina Maslennikova as Zofia, Georgy Nelepp as Jontek and – most notably of all – the great Pavel Lisitsian as Janusz. Nor did Poland itself produce the second complete recording of *Halka*: that was made by Czech Radio in 1953, with Drahomíra Tkalová in the title role and conducted by František Dyk. (*Halka* proved popular in Czechoslovakia around this time, and was seen in Opava in 1948 and at the National Theatre in Prague in 1951; Polish artists brought it to the Prague Spring Festival in 1951, where it was heard again in 1953.)

A handful of other Soviet recordings testify to an openness towards Moniuszko. The Kondrashin-conducted *Halka* mazurka was almost immediately released as the 'A' side of a 78rpm record made by the Tashkent Factory label (1952). Its 'B' side also features Polish music: Alexander Orlov conducts the All-Union Radio Symphony Orchestra in Ogiński's famous Polonaise, *Farewell to the Fatherland*.⁹ Around this time, the Ukrainian-born, Moscow-based tenor Ivan Kozlovsky also recorded Jontek's Act 4 aria, with Samuel Samosud conducting the USSR Radio Orchestra.

In what was then still part of the USSR, yet close to Moniuszko's roots, the Bolshoi Theatre of Minsk staged *Halka* in a production opening on 9 March 1975, directed by Bolesław Jankowski (general director of the Wrocław Opera at that time) and conducted by Yaroslav Voshchak. It was sung in Russian, and at early performances in the run the title role was shared between Tamara Shimko and Anna Lebedeva.¹⁰

Halka reached Hungary and Romania for the first time during the early years of communist rule, being seen in Budapest (10 January 1952) and Cluj (19 May 1952). Further west, but long before any political thaw, *Halka* was performed in the GDR at Erfurt in 1951 and at Görlitz (near the Polish border) in 1952. Most significantly, it returned to the Berlin Staatsoper in 1953, opening on March 18 under the baton of Mieczysław Mierzejewski in a staging based on that year's Warsaw production by Leon Schiller. In keeping with the strictures of socialist realism, his interpretation emphasised

9
In 1953, the conductor Abraham Stasevich recorded Moniuszko's *Bajka* with the All-Union Radio Symphony Orchestra; the other side of this 10" record was Chopin's *Andante spianato et Grande polonaise*, conducted by Samuel Samosud, with Yelena Bekman-Shcherbina as the soloist.

10
Recently, the opera has been given again in Belarus: a production by the opera studio of the Belarusian State Academy of Music opened on 5 April 2019, sung in a Belarusian translation by Svetlana Nemagai and directed by Anna Motornaya.

the element of class struggle, even altering the libretto in order to achieve this.¹¹

Although Chopin's music was heard in Cuba during the composer's lifetime – Chopin's friend Julian Fontana played it there for the first time in 1844 – Moniuszko's had to wait longer. In the first of her famous *Halka* productions abroad, the soprano turned director Maria Fołtyn (who had studied directing with Aleksander Bardini at the State High School of Theatre in Warsaw) made her directorial debut with this opera in Havana in 1971, with the local soprano Yolanda Hernandez in the title role and the Polish tenor Marian Kouba as Jontek. This was the beginning of a period when Fołtyn promoted Moniuszko abroad with missionary zeal.¹²

HAITIAN HIGHLANDS

Perhaps the most unexpected performance of *Halka* to date took place on 7 February 2015 in the Haitian village of Cazale, not just *en plein air* but on a dusty street. Here an opera originally set in the Polish highlands was seen in a mountainous region of the Caribbean island – the sort of place that inspired the Haitian proverb 'Dèyè mòn gen mòn', meaning 'behind mountains there are more mountains'. Though a one-off performance, it was filmed and documented for the Polish Pavilion of the 56th Venice Biennale, with a book as an offshoot of the project.¹³ The book repeatedly invokes the spirit of *Fitzcarraldo*, but where Werner Herzog's film – inspired by the building of the Teatro Amazonas and efforts to get Caruso to come and sing there – might best be described as surreal fiction that feels like a documentary, *Halka/Haiti* is really a documentary masquerading as far-fetched fiction.

Why Haiti? Tracing their roots to Napoleonic times, a small community of Polish Haitians endures to this day, but the recent rediscovery of a deep Polish-Haitian affinity has caused some soul-searching. As this book argues, Poles were themselves not only victims of imperialist oppression but also agents (albeit in a minor way) in the history of colonialism. The connecting link in all of this was Napoleon.¹⁴ In 1802–03, over 5,000 Polish soldiers went to fight in the then colony of Saint-Domingue, taking sides with the French in the war of independence for what became the Republic of Haiti. Many fell in battle, but many others deserted and sided with the black revolutionaries when they realised they were fighting for the shared ideals of freedom and ownership of their land.¹⁵

Descendants of these Polish soldiers still live, now fully assimilated, in Cazale, and it was really for them that this *Halka* was staged. Through fascinating documentation consisting of essays, interviews, stills from the film and many photographs (including of the performance, showing traditional Polish costumes being worn in scruffy Caribbean surroundings), *Halka/Haiti* tells how this project

11
The programme gives no indication of the language in which it was sung, though it was presumably German.

12
Fołtyn would subsequently take the opera as far afield as Japan, Turkey, Canada, Mexico and Brazil, doing so sometimes in collaboration with Bytom's Opera Śląska, and eventually running into controversy in the United States when, during the Solidarność years, some Polish exiles boycotted her state-sponsored productions. See Maria Fołtyn, *Żyłam sztuką, żyłam miłością* [I lived for art, I lived for love] (Warsaw and Radom: Wydawnictwo i Zakład Poligrafii Instytutu Technologii Eksploatacji, 1997), 200.

13
C. T. Jasper and Joanna Malinowska, *Halka/Haiti – 18°48'05"N 72°23'01"W*, ed. Magdalena Moskalewicz (Los Angeles and Warsaw: Inventory Press/Zachęta, 2015)

14
After the third and final partition of Poland, in 1795, the Poles had been left with little option other than to volunteer to fight for Bonaparte, their only hope – and one ultimately dashed – in gaining support against Poland's occupiers.

15
The success of the Haitian uprising, compared with the continuing repression back home, must have been sobering to the surviving Poles, who were given citizenship and protected by the Constitution of Haiti when it was promulgated on 20 May 1805.

united singers, a conductor and a directorial team from Poznań with locally sourced dancers and an orchestra from nearby Port-au-Prince – a heart-warming story of a remarkable endeavour.

WESTERN HORIZONS

Given historic waves of Polish emigration to the United States, it is scarcely surprising that *Halka* reached that country before many others. Yet the first New York performance, in June 1903, was sung in Russian. *Halka* was heard in Polish in Milwaukee on 13 May 1923, and in New York at the Manhattan Opera House on 8 March 1924, when the role of Stolnik was sung by no less a bass than Adam Didur. On 20 May 1929 it was performed under the microphones of the NBC in New York and broadcast by thirty radio stations across America. New York's Mecca Temple Auditorium hosted a staging in March 1930, and *Halka* was seen in Chicago in 1934 and 1937. The Polonia Opera Company, which had already performed *Straszny Dwór* in 1927, was set up under the direction of Louis Kowalski, who took *Halka* to several centres with Polish populations – such as Buffalo, Chicago, Detroit and Hertford. Kowalski's last performance of *Halka* was at Carnegie Hall on 24 May 1959. The opera had also been performed in English at the Civic Opera House in Chicago, on 23 January 1949. Later, around the time of the Maria Foltyn tours mentioned above, there was at least one other production of *Halka* in New York, given by the Bel Canto Opera at the Robert F. Wagner School Theatre in June 1982, and it was well reviewed in *The New York Times*.

Halka reached the UK belatedly, produced by University College Opera on 9 February 1961. Organised by students (University College is part of the University of London), UCO was founded in 1951 and still fulfils its mission today of reviving rare or neglected repertoire, and *Halka* was indeed the first of many British premieres it has given, with the title role taken by Jennifer Cox and conducted by Anthony Addison. Reviewing it in *Opera* magazine, Andrew Porter wrote that, 'Everybody has heard about [*Halka*], and nobody has heard it – or heard more than those excerpts on the Deutsche Grammophon record.'¹⁶ For the benefit of readers then unfamiliar with the work, Porter went on to position the plot 'somewhere between *La Vida breve* and *Giselle*' and said, 'One understands well why it holds the Polish stage – but not why no one has ever thought of doing it here before.' He also noted that the dances were 'provided by the Polish YMCA.'¹⁷

This 1961 British premiere would suggest that nothing came of the valiant wartime efforts of the Książnica Polska in Glasgow, run by Mrs Jadwiga Harasowska between 1940 and 1948, which in 1941 published an abridged edition of the score of *Halka*. In her foreword, Harasowska wrote, 'We sincerely hope the day will come when the music of "Halka" will resound from some British stage, finding a vivid echo in the hearts of British listeners.' To facilitate this, the

16

The earliest Western recorded release was a 1958 LP on DG, conducted by Mieczysław Mierzejewski, with the soprano Alina Bolechowska, tenor Bogdan Paprocki, baritone Andrzej Hiolski, bass Edmund Kossowski and the Radio-Symphonie-Orchester Berlin.

17

Opera, Vol. 12 No. 3, 278.

79-page edition includes a full score of the overture plus an abridged piano arrangement of the rest of the opera.

The most renowned celebration of neglected repertoire in the British Isles takes place each autumn in the Republic of Ireland at the Wexford Festival; it has not staged *Halka*, but it produced *Straszny Dwór* in 1999. In 1984, the Brighton Festival hosted Warsaw Chamber Opera (May 7–9) with its production of the two-act *Halka*, the first professional staging of the original version since its premiere in 1848. Ruben Silva conducted a cast including Aleksandra Lemiszka (*Halka*), Alicja Słowakiewicz (*Zofia*), Jerzy Mahler (*Janusz*) and Andrzej Poraszka (*Jontek*). In *Opera* magazine, Hilary Finch wrote: 'Moniuszko realized that "that which is emotional, indigenous, local, that which is an echo of our childhood memories, never ceases to please the inhabitants of our country"; and a largely Polish audience on the first night was quick to respond to the sense of struggle for individual and national identity running as a ground-bass under the work's more intimate emotional drama. The work was, after all, written between the Peasants' Revolt of 1846 and the January Uprising of 1863, and now, as then, the point was made in Kazimierz Dejmek's production: primitive, even iconic in movement and gesture against the pleasing unity of earth-browns, reds and creams in Jan Polewka's masterly naive designs.'¹⁸ It should be noted that in Germany, the Theater Oberhausen also staged the two-act *Halka*, in May 1990.

MOUNTAINS WITHOUT BORDERS

Moniuszko's bicentenary year marks the thirtieth anniversary of the fall of communism in Central and Eastern Europe, but despite open borders and an increasingly cosmopolitan musical world, *Halka* and the composer's other operas remain well-kept secrets so far as wider musical life is concerned. The challenge now, for those interested in promoting Moniuszko's music abroad, must be to encourage major non-Polish artists to tackle his work; one milestone in this regard was Polish National Opera's invitation to David Pountney to stage *Straszny Dwór* in Warsaw in 2015, making him the first international director to produce a Moniuszko opera. International conductors, too, have been invited to Warsaw for Moniuszko performances, and it must be hoped that the attention they pay to Moniuszko will stimulate wider interest in his music: Marc Minkowski conducted a new Polish National Opera production at the end of 2011, and, as noted above, Fabio Biondi came with his Europa Galante ensemble to perform the Italian version of *Halka* at the 2018 Chopin and his Europe festival.¹⁹ For the first time in over half a century, *Halka* is due to return to Vienna, with the Theater an der Wien hosting Mariusz Treliński's new production in December 2019, an event that will surely show again the considerable totemic significance of Poland's national opera.

18
Opera, Vol. 35, Festival Issue, 43.

19
Released on CD, NIFCCD 082-083.