

Season 2015/2016

Friday, 4 March 2016
Ilija M. Kolarac Foundation at 8pm

For Adventurers

Conductor: **Vladimir Kulenović**
Soloists: **Ivan Marjanović** and **Aleksandar Radulović**, percussion duo

Program:

A. Pärt: *Cantus in memoriam Benjamin Britten*
Duration: approx. 8 minutes

K. Abe: *Prism Rhapsody II for two marimbas and orchestra*
Duration: approx. 20 minutes

G. Mahler: *Symphony No. 10 (Adagio)*
Duration: approx. 25 minutes

B. Britten: *Sinfonia da Requiem* op. 20
Lacrymosa
Dies irae
Requiem aeternam

Duration: approx. 18 minutes

Concertmaster: Miroslav Pavlović

Although Estonian composer **Arvo Pärt** (1935) is best known for his religious music, *Cantus in memoriam Benjamin Britten* is a secular piece created in 1977 to mourn the death of his British fellow composer, whom he admired for his simplicity and the purity of his style. Scored for string orchestra and bell (only a single chime is used, on the pitch A, the tonal centre of the piece), this composition is the prototype of Pärt's idiosyncratic *tintinnabuli* style – his mystical experiences of early Christian chants, inspired by the revival of old polyphonic techniques. Pärt's most popular piece is based on a simple melodic idea in a descending minor scale, in the form of a distinctive canon. The choice of the minor scale is also a hint of homage to medieval tradition – historically, instead of major and minor scales, a system of modes was used. One of them was the Aeolian mode, which is identical to the modern A minor scale. The score starts and ends with bars of silence. A bell struck three times announces Britten's death. While certain instruments play notes from the scale, others are focused only on three notes from the chord, whereas various themes end in chords with "Picardy" major third, as yet another example of the old tradition.

Japanese composer **Keiko Abe** (1937) has built her classical music career initially as an exceptional, internationally acclaimed marimba player, and later also as a composer. Her performance style is a combination of creative power, sensibility and virtuosic technique, with improvisation as a prominent element. Through collaboration with the Yamaha Corporation, Keiko Abe contributed to the development of the new version of the marimba, the range of which was stretched from four octaves to five and thus became a standard solo instrument.

Prism rhapsody II was written in 2001 as one of the multiple versions of her previous pieces *Conversation in the Forest* and *Prism rhapsody II*, in which the composer used various combinations of instruments with the focus on the marimba, as well as on other percussion instruments, and with the accompaniment of various ensembles. Constant energy and movement are at the core of this piece. Although the tempo is quick, the dramatic aspect and expressiveness do not become less significant, allowing the soloists to demonstrate a wide range of emotions.

Although some of the ideas for Symphony No 10 by **Gustav Mahler** (1860-1911) date back to 1908, the composer completed the largest part of this piece in the summer of 1910. Having laid down the frame for the entire symphony, Mahler partially orchestrated the first two movements and the beginning of the third, before he entirely stopped working on this piece and went back to revising his Symphony No 9. Thus, in the state in which Mahler left the Tenth Symphony, it was not ready for performance. The structure of this five-movement cycle is symmetric, with the two outer, comprehensive and slower movements wrapped around the quicker, inner movements: *Andante-Adagio*; *Scherzo*; *Purgatorio - Allegro moderato*; *Scherzo. Nichtzuschnell*; *Finale. Langsam, schwer*. There were several attempts to complete and fully orchestrate the piece.

The first and third movements were first prepared for performance by composer Ernst Krenek in 1924, and then the score was further developed by several composers and musicologists. From a number of different versions made between 1924 and 2002, the most frequently performed version was the one completed by musicologist Deryck

Cooke in the 1960s. He elaborated several versions of the symphony, the final one completed in 1975. Although Cooke and his associates were aware that only Mahler could have completed this work properly, which is why they called their score "the complete performing version", conductors nowadays mostly perform only the first movement (*Adagio*), arguing that this is the only part of the symphony that was entirely written by Mahler himself. Another reason why his friends and associates Alban Berg, Anton Webern and Bruno Walter also strongly opposed any attempts at completing the symphony was Mahler's explicit wish that the manuscript should be burnt after his death.

The circumstances surrounding the composition of the Tenth Symphony were very emotionally difficult for the composer and they obviously influenced the creation of this piece. The expression of his feelings for his wife Alma is also apparent from the textual remarks he left in the manuscript: "für dich leben! für dich sterben!" (*To live for you! To die for you!*) The introduction to the symphony indicates a connection with the final movement of his Symphony No 9. The clash of thematic materials is found throughout the movement and the music finally ends without any signs of resolved dramatic internal conflict. The symphony's *emotional burden* is not relieved until the extensive final movement, which incorporates and links the music from previous movements and brings the final reconciliation of the fierce thematic conflicts.

The most significant orchestral work by Benjamin Britten (1913-1976), *Sinfonia da Requiem* was created in 1940, as one of the pieces commissioned by the Japanese Government to mark the 2600th anniversary of the founding of the Japanese Empire. Beside the Brit, other hired composers included Richard Strauss and Jacques Ibert. Since it was a short notice, the composer decided to offer a piece he had started as a dedication to his late parents, characterised by a melancholic solemn tone. It was exactly this quality of his work, as well as the fact that the movements were named in the Christian liturgical tradition, that was disliked by the Japanese Government, leading to its rejection. The composition was premiered under Sir John Barbirolli by the New York Philharmonic in March 1941. Britten's first orchestral work that did not include a soloist was conceived in the form of a three-movement cycle with contrasting movements.

Danica Maksimović