



Season 2016/2017

Friday, 23 September 2016
Ilija M. Kolarac Foundation, 8 pm

For Lovers

Conductor: **Daniel Raiskin**
Soloist: **Kolja Blacher**, violin

Program:

A. Vrebalov/J. King: *10.000 Things*, Belgrade Philharmonic commission
Duration: approx. 14 minutes

J. Sibelius: Concerto for Violin and Orchestra
Allegro moderato
Adagio di molto
Allegro, ma non tanto
Duration: approx. 35 minutes

F. Schreker: *Nachtstück* from the opera *The Distant Sound*
Duration: approx. 15 minutes

P. I. Tchaikovsky: *Francesca da Rimini*
Duration: approx. 25 minutes

Concertmaster: **Miroslav Pavlović**

Composer **Aleksandra Vrebalov** (1970), who lives and works in the USA, is one of the most acclaimed representatives of contemporary Serbian musical community. A recipient of many awards, scholarships and accolades, Aleksandra's rich career is marked by cooperation with numerous renowned artists including composer **John King**, director Bill Morrison, choreographer Patricia Okenwa, visual artist Igor Antić and others. Aleksandra Vrebalov's works have been performed by famous performers including the Kronos Quartet, David Krakauer, ETHEL, the Momenta Quartet, TAJJ String Quartet, the Belgrade Philharmonic Orchestra, Opera of the Serbian National Theatre, Ingmar Duo, Vojvodina Symphony Orchestra and many others. By commissioning the piece **10,000 Things** from the composing duo Vrebalov/King for the Season 2016/17, the Belgrade Philharmonic Orchestra is continuing fruitful cooperation with Aleksandra. The two authors said the following about their piece:

As we joined efforts on *10,000 Things*, we wished to explore ideas about authorship, ownership and the creative process without a definition of „myself“, re-examining the concept of individuality and personal style in art. Our togetherness thus became the critical part of our method of work on this piece. We started off with an agreement on the selection of instruments, the tentative duration and the macro structure of the piece, which was at the same time detailed, as well as opened for us both to interpret it in a way that is specific to our individual creative processes. Both of us were frequently cooperating with other artists – choreographers, visual artists, poets – so we are familiar with the process of joint creation. But the thing that makes this piece unique for us is that there was no hierarchy in the division of creative work or decision-making. If we looked at the piece as a materialised artistic form, we imagined it as a huge painting canvas on which both of us could make an intervention at any time, by adding colour with any brush, on any part of it, at any moment (in the case of music, for example, by working on its ending before the middle part or the beginning were finished). We agreed on the boundaries of our canvas, and everything that we put in that framework was accepted. Leaving space for the other side to add something, or not leaving any, led to our mutual inspiration by ideas and to a continuous process of complementation, resulting in these *10,000 Things*. We were also aware that our individual musical expressions would blend in and the idea of their transformation into a new, special language was exciting. That new language is a part of the essence of the piece, defined by the circumstances in which it was created, its character, formal and emotional content. The core qualities that we fostered in the making of the *10,000 Things* were acceptance, trust, curiosity, imagination, openness and joy.

The Concerto for Violin and Orchestra in D minor was the only concertante piece ever written by Finnish composer **Jean Sibelius** (1865–1957). By dedicating his only concertante piece to the violin, Sibelius wanted to express his long-term obsession with the idea of becoming a violin virtuoso. Nevertheless, despite keen desire, he was unable to pass the audition for the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra in his youth owing to huge stage fright, so he turned to composing.

The piece was premiered by Victor Nováček, a Hungarian pedagogue of Czech origin, in Helsinki in 1904. This unusual selection of the soloist was above all influenced by financial difficulties. Namely, the first performance of the concerto was planned for the Berlin audience, and the piece was originally dedicated to the renowned violinist Willy

Burmester. However, Burmester was unable to travel to Helsinki, so the difficult burden of performing this demanding concerto fell on Nováček. Since Nováček had very little time to fully prepare, the premiere expectedly received poor reviews. Sibelius then significantly revised his piece, deleted many sections and simplified the solo part. The first performance of the revised Concerto for Violin and Orchestra took place the following year in Berlin. Its original version was unknown to the public until 1931, when Sibelius' heirs permitted one live performance and one recording. This was done by violinist Leonidas Kavakos and the Lahti Symphony Orchestra, under the baton of conductor Osmo Vänskä. Despite the pronounced virtuosity of the solo violin part, the concerto also treats the orchestral instruments in the same manner, so their role in the overall fabric of the piece is greatly significant. In addition, another aspect that indicates the special place of the solo violin in Sibelius' composition is the extended solo cadenza in the first movement, which takes the role of the development section in the sonata form.

Franz Schreker (1878–1934) belongs in the group of late Romantic German-Austrian composers, slightly younger than Richard Strauss and Gustav Mahler. It was indeed the works of the latter two composers, together with Richard Wagner's, that exerted the strongest influence on Schreker's musical language. He composed music in Vienna at the turn of the century, and his work remained in the shadow of the oeuvre of composers from the Second Viennese School. In his lifetime, he was predicted to have successful future in the world of music, only to be marginalized both as a composer and as a pedagogue due to his political work and affiliation with certain artistic circles.

The libretto for *The Distant Sound* was completed by Schreker in 1903; however, owing to the reviews he received from the composition Professor Robert Fuchs, he abandoned this project for a while. He then returned to it in 1905, inspired by the premiere of Strauss' *Salome*. **Nachtstück**, the orchestral overture to the opera's third act, was performed for the first time on 25 November 1909. Thanks to the reactions to the concert, Schreker was encouraged to finally complete the opera in 1910.

Francesca da Rimini: Symphonic Fantasy after Dante Op. 32, is a piece written by **Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky** (1840–1893) in less than three weeks, during his visit to Bayreuth in 1876. The composer dedicated this piece to his friend and former pupil Sergei Taneyev.

The piece is conceived as a symphonic interpretation of the tragic fate of Francesca da Rimini, who was immortalized in Dante's *Divine Comedy*. The noble heroine fell in love with the brother of her cruel husband. When the husband discovered the affair, he killed the two lovers, who were then condemned to Hell, eternal storm and damnation for their adultery. The character of Francesca da Rimini, who was Dante's contemporary, was used as inspiration for many theatre, opera and symphonic adaptations. As regards the selection of the literary basis, the musical solutions and the very genre of the symphonic poem, this piece shows that in this period Tchaikovsky was mostly influenced by Franz Liszt and Richard Wagner. The symphonic poem can be divided in three sections with a small introduction, which correspond to the plot of Dante's epic poem.

The music from this piece has been used in several feature films and television series, ballets and cartoons.

Bojana Radovanović

*In the season 2016/17, the Belgrade Philharmonic Orchestra is giving an opportunity to young musicologists to enhance their professional training by writing program notes.