

Season 2016/2017

Friday, 13 January 2017
Ilija M. Kolarac Foundation, 8pm

For Connoisseurs

Conductor: **Cristian Mandeal**

Programme:

A. Bruckner: Symphony No. 7 in E major
Allegro moderato
Adagio. Sehr feierlich und sehr langsam.
Scherzo. Sehr schnell.
Finale. Bewegt, doch nicht schnell.

Duration: approx. 70 minutes

Concertmaster: **Miroslav Pavlović**

The most significant part in the oeuvre of the Austrian composer **Anton Bruckner** (1824–1896) are symphonies, spiritual and chamber music. As a representative of late Romanticism, Bruckner composed music with rich harmonic language, strongly polyphonic character and considerable size and length. He wrote nine symphonies, the last one unfinished. Most of his symphonies typically have many versions and editions, which have caused misunderstanding in their performance, listening and analysis – a phenomenon called *The Bruckner Problem* by the musicologists.

Although Bruckner's symphonies clearly indicate a strong influence of Beethoven's and Wagner's music, they have a very unique conception, reflected primarily in their form. Bruckner's unusual structural solutions have contributed to the development of a new and monumental symphonic organism, as well as to a new school of symphonic composing. Beethoven's influence, most notably of his famous Symphony No. 9, is discernible on the macro level in the sequence of movements and certain formal gestures, such as the mysterious and quiet introductions in the first movements of Bruckner's symphonies. Furthermore, almost all his symphonies feature a scherzo and a slow movement, as well as a finale, culminating with a grandiose hymn. In terms of orchestration, his greatest inspiration were the pieces of Richard Wagner, but Bruckner's interests go even further back in time, turning to old masters of counterpoint and instrumentation. In his symphonies, the composer combines lyricism with an inherently polyphonic design, featuring large-scale forms and harmonic juxtapositions.

Symphony No. 7 in E major, composed in the period 1881–1883, is one of Bruckner's best-known symphonic works. This symphony is usually referred to as the *Lyric*, though this appellation is not the composer's own. It was dedicated to Ludwig II of Bavaria. The symphony was premiered by the Gewandhaus Orchestra under Arthur Nikisch on 30 December 1884 in Leipzig. This premiere brought Bruckner the greatest success he had known in his life.

The four extensive movements demonstrate a wide spectrum of human emotions, from deep suffering to triumphant joy, from tragedy to everyday vivacity. The symphony starts with a melody of broad range and unusual intervals played by cellos, while the other strings follow in tremolo. Bruckner claimed that he had heard this melody in a dream, played on a viola, and that he had written it down on awakening. However, there is a noticeable quotation from the Credo of his D minor Mass, which he was currently revising. The second movement was inspired by the tragic anticipation and, ultimately, the death of Richard Wagner (1813–1883), the composer greatly appreciated and admired by Bruckner. In accordance with its subtitle *Sehr feierlich und sehr langsam*, the movement starts with four Wagner tubas, which was their first appearance in a symphony. The melody is then taken over by violins, leading it all the way to the most famous, principal theme of the movement, characterised by melodic and harmonic exuberance, as well as a huge emotional charge. This movement also features a phrase from Bruckner's *Te Deum*, on which the composer was working concurrently. Composed before the second movement, the third movement is a Beethovenian quick scherzo. It is characterised by a resolute rhythmical background and proficient counterpoint skills. The middle part brings a pastoral theme, which is, however, embedded in a somewhat bleak and anxious atmosphere. The final movement starts with the change of atmosphere and presents a theme that denotes freshness and new energy of life. The finale is solemn and monumental.

Although Bruckner did not support the growing nationalism in the 19th century, his Symphony No. 7, especially its second movement, have a significant place in the dark history of the Nazi Germany. Namely, several decades after his death, the Nazis claimed Bruckner's music, among other composers, as pure German music, which best portrayed the values they advocated. *Adagio* was performed in 1937 when Hitler consecrated

Bruckner's bust in Regensburg, and broadcast on the radio on 31 January 1943 after Germany's defeat in Stalingrad, as well as on 1 May 1945, when the news of Hitler's death was announced.

Beside Symphony No. 4, this piece is Bruckner's most popular symphony, both in the concert hall and on record. The first commercial recording of the Symphony No. 7 was made in 1924, and then it was recorded many times again by acclaimed orchestras and conductors, including Herbert von Karajan, Kurt Sanderling, Eugen Jochum, Bernard Haitink, Günter Wand, Karl Böhm and many others.

Bojana Radovanović*

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