

Season 2016/2017

Friday, 16 December 2016
Ilija M. Kolarac Foundation, 8pm

For Megalomaniacs

Conductor: **Zsolt Hamar**
Soloist: **Torleif Thedéen**, violoncello

Programme:

G. Kancheli: *...a la duduki* for orchestra

Duration: approx. 20 minutes

D. Shostakovich: Concerto for violoncello and orchestra No. 1 in E flat major, Op. 107

Allegretto
Moderato
Cadenza – Attacca
Allegro con moto

Duration: approx. 30 minutes

S. Rachmaninov: *Symphonic Dances* op. 45, symphonic suite

Non allegro
Andante con moto (Tempo di valse)
Lento assai – Allegro vivace – Lento assai. Come prima – Allegro vivace

Duration: approx. 35 minutes

Concert master: **Miroslav Pavlović**

Tonight's programme opens with the orchestral piece *...a la duduki* by Georgian composer Giya Kancheli (1935). Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the contemporary composer has lived and worked in Europe – initially in Berlin, then in Antwerp, Belgium, where he became composer-in-residence for the Royal Flemish Philharmonic.

Kancheli was born in Tbilisi, where he studied and later also taught at the State Conservatoire. At the same time, he worked as the music director of the Rustaveli Theatre in Tbilisi for twenty years. **As the most important successor of the great symphonist Shostakovich**, Kancheli dedicated his oeuvre to this particular genre of music, so his most significant works are his seven symphonies, the interesting orchestral pieces and the opera *Music for the Living*.

The piece *...a la duduki*, written in 1995, was named after the duduk, a flute-like instrument from the Caucasus region, with a penetrating, unique sound. In this piece, Kancheli **presents a wide range of orchestral sounds by creating sharp dynamic contrasts, intelligently fragmented by dramatic pauses, and by setting different orchestral groups into opposition. The quintet of brass instruments stands out in the thick orchestral fabric, with the trumpet receiving the special solo treatment as its part emulates the archaic, stylized sound of a folk instrument. The improvisational nature of folk music performance** is particularly visible in the cadenza, when the lines of two trumpets and horns intertwine. In the end, there is the waning echo of that motif.

Dmitri Dmitriyevich Shostakovich (1906–1975) is one of the most significant 20th century Russian composers. As a result of his opposition to the cultural policy of Stalin's regime, his music was twice denounced (in 1936 and 1948) by the cultural circles. This led to many of his works being banned, while others had to be revised before they could be performed and published. In spite of this, Shostakovich was one of the highly appreciated Soviet composers.

The music of Dmitri Shostakovich abounds with **thematic and character contrasts**, grotesque elements and vaguely discernible keys. His style shows noticeable influences of neoclassical works of Igor Stravinsky, as well as Gustav Mahler's late romanticism. Shostakovich produced a rich and diverse oeuvre – he composed 15 symphonies, six concertos, 15 string quartets, three operas, several cycles of solo songs, as well as chamber music pieces.

Shostakovich dedicated his first concerto for violoncello and orchestra to his friend, acclaimed cellist Mstislav Rostropovich. The piece was written in 1959, while Rostropovich received the score in late September and premiered it a few days later with the Leningrad Philharmonic Orchestra, under Yevgeny Mravinsky. Couple of days later, Rostropovich also recorded the concerto with the Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra.

The concert is atypically structured – it consists of four movements, and the second, third and fourth movements are played without a pause. **Furthermore, this concerto is considered as one of the most technically demanding pieces composed for this instrument.** The first movement opens with the DSCH motif, which represents Shostakovich's musical signature. Like Bach, who impressed the BACH melody motif in

some of his works, Shostakovich also used his music to “write” his own initials. The composer repeats this motif throughout the concerto, but it is also used in a few other compositions.

The last part of tonight’s concert is reserved for the *Symphonic Dances*, **the last piece by Russian composer**, pianist and conductor Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873–1943). *Symphonic Dances* is an orchestral suite, consisting of three movements. It was created in 1940, four years after his Third Symphony, and it was premiered in January 1941. The usual symphony ensemble was expanded by **a set of percussions and an impressive solo part of alto saxophones in the first movement.**

Rachmaninoff initially named the piece *Fantastic Dances*, with movement titles of **Noon, Twilight and Midnight**. In the final version, the programmatic titles of the movements were abandoned, but the original general mood of the movements was preserved.

Symphonic Dances is a blend of interesting rhythmic patterns and **rich harmonies**, which bears certain reference to Igor Stravinsky’s *The Rite of Spring*. In the opening movement, Rachmaninoff quoted the beginning of his First Symphony, the motif inspired by Russian church music, while the final movement contains quotations of the *Dies Irae* and *Blessed be the Lord* motifs from his *All-Night Vigil*. **With this act of self-quotation, the composer in a way summed up his entire oeuvre, giving additional symbolism to the piece that would turn out to be his last work.**

Ana Đorđević*

*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.