

2017-18 Season

BELGRADE PHILHARMONIC

Air

Conductor: **Howard Griffiths**

Soloist: **Yeol Eum Son**

Kolarac Concert Hall
Friday, 18 May 2018, at 8:00 p.m.

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Program:

Antonín Dvořák

Midday Witch op. 108

Duration: approx. 14 min.

Antonín Dvořák

Concerto for Piano and Orchestra in G Minor op. 33

Allegro agitato

Andante sostenuto

Allegro con fuoco

Duration: approx. 25 min.

Franz Schubert

Symphony No. 3 in D Major D. 200

Adagio maestoso – Allegro con brio

Allegretto

Menuetto: Vivace

Presto vivace

Duration: approx. 25 min.

Concertmaster: Tijana Milošević

After returning to his native Bohemia from the United States, **Antonín Dvořák** (1841-1904), inspired by the *Bouquet of Folk Legends* (1853) by the Czech author Karel Jaromír Erben, wrote four symphonic poems. Created in the course of 1896 - the same time as *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* by Richard Strauss - these "orchestral ballads" have very unusual poetic templates. In the *Midday Witch* the composer describes a terrifying scene in a forest cottage by shaping his musical material based on the natural changes in intonation and rhythm while pronouncing words in the Czech language as well as his careful selection of instrumental timbres from the various orchestra sections. By so doing, he has rendered the key passages of Erben's ballad recognizable to the same extent that the outlines of the four-part structure of the symphony are present in this one-movement composition.

After the introductory idyllic atmosphere, the mother (orchestra) threatens the disobedient son (oboe) with the story of a witch that comes to take away naughty children; then the witch arrives, symbolized by a sudden change of tempo; in the turbulent allegro that follows the witch chases the terrified mother who is grasping her child. At the stroke of noon (chimes), the witch leaves; the father returns home and in the final lament finds the child dead, suffocated in the firm grasp of his mother. Through the tragic climax of the composition we can hear the echoing of the witch's sneer indicating that she has triumphed.

Composed in 1876, the *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra in G Minor* was the earliest and least known concert piece in the oeuvre of **Antonín Dvořák**. Dvorak wrote his only piano concert for well-known Czech pianist Karel Slavkovský, who premiered this piece in Prague in 1878. In the process of composing this work, Dvorak realized that he was not writing a piece in which the solo part would compete with the orchestra in the manner of Liszt's virtuosity; on the contrary, he wrote a symphonized kind of concerto in which the piano was an integral (albeit often leading) part of the orchestra. Many people have ascribed the absence of the expected Romantic virtuosity to the fact that Dvorak was not a pianist and cite this as the reason for the concert not being popular among the performers. On the other hand, his Concerto for Cello in B Minor (1894-1895) is one of the most frequently performed pieces in the literature of this instrument.

Each of the three movements possesses a symphonic breadth and, apart from being based on that specific genre-like permeation, it also communicates in an interesting way with the composer's other works - a delicate horn solo from the second movement seems to herald the *New World Symphony* (1893), while the finale evokes the character of the Slavonic Dances (1878, 1886). Also, in the first movement we see similarities with the Piano Concerto No. 1 in D Minor (1958) by Johannes Brahms, who noticed and appreciated in Dvorak's Concerto his "fantasy shaped with ease." Czech pianist Vilém Kurz did a significant revision of the piano part of the concerto.

In an essay published in 1894, Dvorak wrote the following about the early symphonies of **Franz Schubert** (1797-1828): "The more I study them, the more I admire them." Schubert's first six symphonies were written in the period from 1813 to 1818 and during his short life were performed only on informal occasions; The *Third Symphony in D Major* (1815), which he wrote when he was 18 years old, was not premiered until 1881 in London. As a representative of the early 19th century Viennese Romanticism, Schubert based his (symphonic) poetry on the experiences of Haydn, Mozart, and early Beethoven. Those are

elements that also permeate the Third Symphony's classical four-movement cycle, which was also written in D major.

The symphony begins with a slow introduction, like Schubert's previous two symphonies, which reveals Haydn's influence, while the thematic aspect of the introduction is closely related to the main thematic material of the allegro, that is, the first movement. Since it is partly dominated by a bright mood, the expected second slow movement was changed to a merry and elegant allegretto full of humor. In the center of the energetic minuet, coming close to the character of a scherzo, is the *oboe and bassoon duet* in the three-time style of a Laendler. The final *perpetuum mobile* has the rhythm of a tarantella and elements of Rossini's opera buffa. All the movements of this symphony by Schubert, except for the first, indicate that the composer got his inspiration from folklore, or more precisely, folk dances.

Marija Tomić*

*In the 2017-18 season, the Belgrade Philharmonic has given selected young musicologists an opportunity to write program commentaries as a way of enhancing their professional training.