

2017-2018 Season

BELGRADE PHILHARMONIC

The **Fifth** (Element)

Conductor: **Daniel Raiskin**

Soloists: **Vadim Gluzman**, violin

**Evgenija Jeremić**, soprano

Kolarac Concert Hall

Friday, 1 June 2018, at 8:00 p.m.

[www.bgf.rs](http://www.bgf.rs)

Program:

**Leonard Bernstein**

*Serenade after Plato's "Symposium" for Solo Violin, String Orchestra, Harp, and Percussion*

*Phaedrus: Pausanias – lento - allegro*

*Aristophanes – allegretto*

*Eryximachus – presto*

*Agathon – adagio*

*Socrates: Alcibiades – molto tenuto - allegro molto vivace*

Duration: approx. 30 min.

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**Gustav Mahler**

Symphony No. 4 in G Major

*Bedächtig, nicht eilen*

*In gemächlicher Bewegung, ohne Hast*

*Ruhevoll, poco adagio*

*Sehr behaglich*

Duration: approx. 54 min.

Concertmaster: Tijana Milošević

**Leonard Bernstein** (1918-1990), renowned conductor, composer, pianist, teacher, and organizer of musical life, played a very important role in promoting classical music in the United States and US composers in the world and has been remembered as a truly global *superstar* of classical music. The popularity he achieved in the 1950s and 1960s rivals the popularity of the likes of Elvis Presley and Marilyn Monroe, especially after the huge success of his Broadway musicals, notably *West Side Story* (1957).

Bernstein completed his *Serenade* in the summer of 1954. He dedicated it to the memory of his mentor Serge Koussevitzky and his first wife Natalie. The composition was commissioned by the Koussevitzky Foundation. At the same time, the composer kept his promise to his friend, famous violinist Isaac Stern, to write a work that would include a violin solo. It was Stern who played this work for the first time with the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by the composer himself, in Venice, in 1954.

At the end of the musical score, Bernstein added a program note in which he pointed out that there was no literary template but that he had been inspired by *Plato's* text *Banquet (Symposium)*. Much like in this ancient dialogue in which the most notable orators of that time - Phaedrus, Pausanias, Eryximachus, Aristophanes, Agathon, Socrates, and Alcibiades - speak in praise of Love (Eros), so his music is also a series of tributes in praise of love. The form of Plato's work can be followed in five movements, which, according to the composer's own words, are mutually connected so as to develop each from the other. *This principle of evolution and transformation is connected to the beginning solo violin theme whose intervals and contours can be recognized throughout the entire course of the music.* Bernstein's biographer Humphrey Burton notes that *Serenade* could represent a portrait of the composer: bighearted and kind in the first movement, childish in the second, boisterous and playful in the third, soothing and gentle in the fourth, a prophet doomed to failure, and then a jazzy iconoclast in the finale. In performing this composition, the Belgrade Philharmonic is joining in the global celebration of the centennial of the composer's birth.

The first four symphonies by **Gustav Mahler** (1860-1911) are also known as *symphonies of the Magic Horn* from the *Das Knaben Wunderhorn* folk-poem collection. They were all written in the period between 1900 and 1901, after which the composer's language changed and turned in the direction of expressionism. In his first two symphonies the composer depicts his inner world, while the *Third*, from the very start, is joyful and in praise of a happy life. Mahler continues to glorify the innocence and naivety of childhood in his *Fourth Symphony*, which is a kind of "finale" to this symphonic tetralogy.

Mahler knew from the very start how he wanted to finish his *Fourth Symphony*. Namely, a theme from the *Wunderhorn* song *The Heavenly Life*, which was used in the symphony's first movement, was initially imagined as the grand finale for his *Third Symphony*. Mahler logically build up his first three movements toward his planned finale, from complexity to simplicity, from earthly life to a child's vision of heaven. Interestingly enough, he did not name the movements as he customarily did, because he did not want to influence the listeners.

With the exception of the song *The Heavenly Life*, which was written in a version for piano and voice in 1892, the *Fourth Symphony* was created in the period between 1899 and 1901, and the final version was finished in 1911, just before Mahler died. Even though it includes a soprano part, for the sake of returning to the traditional four-movement cycle, with a lesser dimension and standard orchestration, this is considered as Mahler's "most classical" symphony. It opens with flutes and sleigh bells, followed by what the composer himself described as a "childishly simple" theme with violins. A characteristic of the second movement is that the concertmaster uses two violins, one of which is tuned a tone higher (*scordatura*) with the intention of sounding like a *danse macabre*. The third movement has the character of a calm and solemn march, in the form of a variation on two contrasting themes. The focus

of the cycle is the serene finale, which includes a solo soprano in the role of a child singing about its naive notion of heaven.

Biljana Aleksandrovska\*

\*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.  
Translated by Bojan Drndić