

Season 2016/17

Friday, 7 October 2016

Ilija M. Kolarac Foundation, 8pm

For Megalomaniacs

Conductor: **Vladimir Kulenović**

Soloists: **Bojan Pešić**, oboe, **Mihailo Samoran**, clarinet, **Nikola Ćirić**, French horn, and **Sava Djurić**, bassoon

Program:

V. Kulenović: *Boreas, the God of North Wind*, Belgrade Philharmonic commission

Duration: approx. 10 minutes

W. A. Mozart: *Sinfonia concertante* for oboe, clarinet, French horn, and bassoon

Allegro

Adagio

Andante con variazioni

Duration: approx. 30 minutes

R. Strauss: *Thus Spake Zarathustra*

Duration: approx. 35 minutes

Concert master: **Tijana Milošević**

Boreas, the God of North Wind was written as a commission from the Belgrade Philharmonic Orchestra last year. Although the subtitle *Symphony No 8* (similarly as in the case of my *Symphony No 7, Four Seasons of Vincent van Gogh*, premiered a few years ago in Los Angeles) in a way suggests formal contours of a classical symphony, or rather a classical sonata movement, essentially, in both cases, the piece has very little in common with anything “classical”, except for the fundamental elements of contrast and the development part of the sonata movement. It was the same with my first and second symphonies (*Ikar* and *Slovo o svetlosti*), and it seems that I am still obsessed with and drawn to this connection and play between the programmatic and abstract, which leads me to let the music say what the words in the title of the piece cannot convey, and let the words give the name to what only the music can convey. But what exactly I wanted to say – I don’t even know it myself. It is the same in this case, I am leaving it to the musicians and the listeners to find out what I don’t know.

With these words composer **Vuk Kulevović** (1946) introduced his piece ***Boreas, the God of North Wind***, specially commissioned by the Belgrade Philharmonic Orchestra to open the series ***For Megalomaniacs*** in the season 2016/17. Kulevović has written more than a hundred pieces for various ensembles, as well as film and theatre music. Since 1992, he has lived in Boston, teaching counterpoint, orchestration and composition at the Berklee College of Music.

Sinfonia concertante for oboe, clarinet, French horn, and bassoon, written in 1778, is considered one of the great enigmas in the history of music. Namely, there is a debate among musical scholars as to whether **Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart** (1756–1791) is truly the author of this piece. Although his letters and journals include indications that he did compose a *sinfonia concertante* for these four solo instruments, the original score is lost. In support of the theory that this piece is, indeed, Mozart’s, the composer had deep affection for the virtuosic treatment of wind instruments in his operas and concertos. Nevertheless, certain experts for Mozart’s music believe that it is inconceivable that Mozart would have written a homotonal concerto, i.e. with all three movements in the same key – here E-flat major. In spite of great dilemmas, *Sinfonia concertante* is a very popular piece, and as such it is often and readily performed.

The first movement, structured in sonata form, contains three expositions rather than the usual two. One of them is played by the orchestra, while others are intended for the quartet of solo instruments. The second, slow movement brings a lyrical atmosphere, whereas the third is conceived as a theme with ten variations and a coda, separated by orchestral ritornelli.

Inspired by the eponymous philosophical novel by Friedrich Nietzsche, **Richard Strauss** (1864–1949) composed the tone poem ***Thus Spake Zarathustra*** Op. 30, which was premiered in Frankfurt in 1894. The poem caught attention already from its first performance and was very quickly included in repertoires of orchestras worldwide. Strauss divided the piece into nine sections, after the chapters of Nietzsche’s book. Nietzsche’s contemplation of the meaning of life and the nature of universe also found a way into Strauss’ piece as a philosophical fabric. Namely, the riddle also stays unsolved in Richard Strauss’ musical work – the contest of two music keys struggling for

predominance at the end of the poem – C-major, representing the nature, and B-major, representing humanity – does not reach the desired epilogue. By leaving the musical riddle of the tonic unsolved, the composer implicitly revealed his attitude towards the theme of indecipherability of the nature, the universe and the meaning of human life. Years later, he confirmed this attitude: *I just wanted to show that it is impossible to finally conjoin B major and C major. The entire piece illustrates all possible attempts to do that, but it is simply impossible.*

Nevertheless, Strauss explained that it was no intention of his to compose philosophical music or to ornament Nietzsche's great book with his music. Instead, he wanted to demonstrate the evolution of the human race through various stages of development, to the concept of the superhuman, and thus to offer his own homage to Nietzsche's genius.

The first recording of the tone poem *Thus Spake Zarathustra* was made by conductor Sergey Kusevitsky in 1935, with the Boston Symphony Orchestra, while one of the historic recordings was also made by the composer himself, conducting the Vienna Symphony Orchestra in 1944.

The initial motif of the fanfare, titled *Sunrise* in the composer's program notes, became particularly well-known after its use in Stanley Kubrick's 1968 film *2001: A Space Odyssey*. For this occasion, the piece was performed and recorded by the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, under Maestro Herbert von Karajan.

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.