



Season 2016/2017

Friday, 21 April 2017
Belgrade, Ilija M. Kolarac Foundation, 8pm

Saturday, 22 April 2017
Novi Sad, NOMUS, the Synagogue, 8pm

For Beginners

Conductor: **Uroš Lajovic**
Soloist: **Stefan Dohr**, French horn

Programme:

L. van Beethoven: *Leonore*, overture No. 3
Duration: approx. 15 minutes

R. Strauss: Concerto for French horn and Orchestra No. 2 in E-flat major
Allegro
Andante con moto
Rondo. Allegro molto

Duration: approx. 20 minutes

G. Bizet: Symphony No. 1 in C major
Allegro vivo
Andante. Adagio
Allegro vivace
Finale. Allegro vivace

Duration: approx. 33 minutes

Concertmaster: **Miroslav Pavlović**

For his opera *Fidelio*, originally titled *Leonore*, **Ludwig van Beethoven** (1770–1827) composed no fewer than four overtures. He started working on this piece in 1804 and completed the first version in 1805, when the opera was premiered in Vienna. **Leonore, overture No. 3**, composed in 1806, proved to be the most popular version of the overture in both opera and concert performances.

The overture No. 3, which was actually written before the one designated as No. 2, is demonstrative of the *Beethovenian* drama and strength. The first three composed overtures are *operas in miniature*, as they offer insights into the melodies, harmonies and dramatic development of the plot. Beethoven himself recognised this comprehensiveness as a potential problem, which led him to compose the final, fourth overture to *Fidelio* in 1814, which does not reveal everything about the opera before the curtain is up.

The slow opening of the overture No. 3 turns into a unison *allegro* of the strings, which finally leads to a magnificent, solemn hymn to freedom. The central part of the development section features off-stage fanfares. The coda starts with a virtuosic passage in the violins, and moves towards the climax of the overture, announcing the resolution and the jubilant conclusion. Owing to its high dramatic intensity, this overture is sometimes performed before the final scene. Beethoven never objected to this practice and many renowned conductors thereafter, including Mahler and Toscanini, readily adopted this dramaturgical and structural change.

Over a period of almost six decades, which corresponds to the length of time that separates the creation of his first and second horn concerto, the musical language of composer **Richard Strauss** (1864–1949) had noticeably matured through the tone poems, songs and operas he composed in the meantime. Namely, Strauss wrote his first piece for horn and orchestra in 1883, whereas the second horn concerto was not written until 1942. Both concertos are nowadays considered as horn classics and are frequently performed.

Strauss' evolution from a gifted young man to a renowned and successful composer is reflected to a certain extent in the three-movement structure of his Concerto for French horn No. 2. The opening movement reveals eclectic and rhapsodic freedom of the melody, which is also found in the vocal parts of Strauss' operas. From the very beginning, the soloist is required to demonstrate ultimate control of the instrument. By revealing the other side of the composer's musical invention, the middle movement brings peacefulness and serenity in the expression and a virtually chamber-like sound of the French horn and the orchestral accompaniment. The third movement is based on somewhat more compact melodic motifs, which serve as the core of the communication between the soloist and the orchestra and their virtuosic interchange.

French composer **Georges Bizet** (1838–1875) wrote his first symphony at age 17, in 1855, while a student at the Conservatoire de Paris. Besides Bizet's talent, imaginativeness and the sense of melodic and harmonic details, his **Symphony No. 1 in C major** also displays the strong influence that his teacher Charles Gounod's music had on the young composer. It is assumed that Bizet considered this piece as a student assignment, which is why he hadn't published it or made any reference to it in his

correspondence. Symphony No. 1 didn't find its way into concert programmes until eighty years after it was composed. The manuscript was discovered in 1933, in the library of the Conservatoire, amidst other documents, and its first performance took place on 26 February 1935 in Basel, Switzerland. The successfulness of its premiere, under the leadership of conductor Felix Weingartner, is reflected in the fact that the piece was published the same year by the famous Austrian publishing company *Universal Edition*. Symphony No. 1 in C major received its first recording already in 1937, thanks to the conductor Walter Goehr and the London Philharmonic Orchestra. Bizet's youthful masterpiece has since been frequently performed and included in repertoires.

With the procedures he employed in his Symphony No. 1, young Bizet refers the listeners to his musical role models. Comparisons can be done with the music of Charles Gounod, whom Bizet directly quoted and wished to imitate, as well with the symphonies by Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Mendelssohn and Schumann.

In his composition, Bizet did not diverge from the standard four-movement structure. The first movement, *Allegro vivo*, was written in a sonata form. Conversely to the energetic opening theme, in which the most impressive features are the rhythm and the melodic movement of the opening motif, the second theme is lyrical and includes distinctive oboe and flute passages. The introduction to the second movement, *Adagio*, includes a short reminiscence of the memorable motif from the first movement, which is then followed by an idiosyncratic cantilena played by the oboe. The *response* to the oboe section is entrusted to the strings. The broadly elaborated lyrical situation is replaced by a moderately-paced fugue, in which the opening motif, as one of the theme's building blocks, can be discerned once again. The return to the melody played by the oboe leads this movement towards a tranquil conclusion. The quick and vivacious first section of the third movement, in the manner of a Scottish dance, stands in counterpoint with the broad melody in the strings. The *trio* of this movement also reminds of the sounds of bagpipe with its bare fifths. The last movement, *Finale*, written in sonata form, is marked by virtuosity of the strings, emblematic of the composer's youthful spirit.

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.