

Season 2017/2018

THE BELGRADE PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

Series: Philharmania(c)

Conductor: **Fabrice Bollon**

Višnja Popov, mezzosoprano

Thursday, 2 November 2017

Ilija M. Kolarac Foundation, 8pm

www.bgf.rs

Programme:

Anatoly Lyadov

The Enchanted Lake, Op. 62

Duration: approx. 6 minutes

Edward Elgar

Sea Pictures for alto and orchestra, Op. 37

Sea Slumber Song

In haven

Sabbath Morning at Sea

Where Corals Lie

The Swimmer

Duration: approx. 23 minutes

Mihovil Logar

Goldfish, suite No. 3

Duration: approx. 11 minutes

Sergei Rachmaninoff

The Isle of the Dead, Op. 29

Duration: approx. 22 minutes

Concertmaster: Tijana Milošević

Anatoly Lyadov (1855-1914), a contemporary of the Mighty Handful, a student of Rimsky-Korsakov and subsequently Prokofiev's teacher, did not achieve the same glory as his fellow compatriots, both predecessors and successors, although he fostered the same composing style, rooted in the tradition of the late Russian Romanticism, with hints of Impressionism. *The Enchanted Lake* (1909), one of the three tone poems that secured Lyadov a place in the history of Russian music, was created towards the end of his modest composing career, and it was one of his most favourite pieces, which he referred to as a *fable-tableau*. The piece entirely consists of fluttering sound colours, which, as the composer explained, illustrate *the incessantly changeable stillness and seeming immobility*. Although its title is programmatic, Lyadov's poem lacks a narrative; it is a frozen image of stars oscillating on the water surface, in which the only movement is the *perpetuum mobile* of the lake's waves.

Sea Pictures Op. 37 by **Edward Elgar** (1857-1934) is a five-movement cycle of songs for voice and orchestra. Initially written for a soprano, the piece was rewritten and adapted for a lower female vocal range at the request of famous English contralto Clara Butt. Her performance at the premiere in 1899 attracted a lot of attention in England, since the singer sang the piece dressed in a mermaid outfit, discarding the last vestige of the Victorian era – the corset. The reception was also mixed; although the audience loved the songs, the critics disapproved of Elgar's choice of verses, considering them frivolous. Rarely performed compared to Elgar's other pieces, *Sea Pictures* illustrate the attraction of unexplored areas, and the sea in the late 19th century was still a great unknown and a subject of legends, at the same time symbolising the creation of life as well as death, which Elgar found to be both seductive and intimidating. The relation between the performers, which seems as though the orchestra constantly threatens to smother the voice with its power, symbolically represents one of the dominant motifs of romantic mental images: the picture of a lonely human figure, standing alone against the nature. The nature of the songs ranges from a lyrical lullaby, to a love ballad, a cantata filled with solemn religious ecstasy, an emphatically sentimental aria and a dramatic finale, while their musical aspect is equally diverse and includes sentimental salon melodies and sharp expressiveness revealing influences of Strauss and Mahler. After Elgar, many other English composers started turning to the sea as the source of inspiration: *Sea Pictures* were followed by *Songs of the Sea* by Charles Stanford, *The Sea* by Frank Bridge and, the best known among them, *A Sea Symphony* by Ralph Vaughan Williams.

The full-length ballet *Goldfish* (1950) by **Mihovil Logar** (1902-1998) was premiered in 1953 at the Belgrade National Theatre, under Oskar Danon. The backbone of the ballet was taken from the well-known folk fairytale of the same name, which forewarns of the dangers associated with human avarice, and which Alexander Pushkin believed to be of South Slavic origin, although it is well-known by all Slavic peoples. Since Logar set up the plot in a fishing village in Istria, beside the dominant impressionistic sound the music also features elements of Croatian coastland folklore songs, which give it special ornaments. The third suite, subtitled *Seafarers'*, is a miniature demonstration of all main characteristics of Logar's post-WWII music: complex dancing rhythm, ecstatic tempo, picturesque melodies, absolute command of the widely expressive orchestral range and the mastery of painting with

instrumental colours. The vibrant and lively tone of this suite is reminiscent of Logar's famous thought – "all music is singing".

The tone poem *The Isle of the Dead* (1908) by **Sergei Rachmaninoff** (1873-1943) is a quintessential example of the final outputs of Russian Romanticism of the early 20th century. Rachmaninoff drew the inspiration for this work from the eponymous *dream picture* by Swedish symbolist Anrold Böcklin, which the composer had a chance to see during his 1907 visit to Paris. The ominous title and concept of this painting, whose five different versions depict a desolate and rocky islet with tall cypress trees, approached by a rowboat carrying a coffin, left a strong impression on the young composer. The beginning of the musical transposition of *The Isle of the Dead* explores the lowest register of the symphony orchestra in the quietest possible dynamics; the musical flow of the piece rises several times to the extreme limits of expressive intensity, before it plunges back into gloomy silence. Rachmaninoff's *motto*, which can be found in many of his works, is interpolated several times. It is a quote of the Latin hymn *Dies irae*, which is traditionally sung in the Requiem. The finale of this dramatic musical navigation reminds of its beginning: in the rhythm of a rowboat rocking in the water, voices die down into complete silence one by one.

Tisa Jukić*

The next concert of the Belgrade Philharmonic Orchestra, as part of *The Fifth Element* series, is scheduled on **10 November 2017** at the Ilija M. Kolarac Foundation, 8pm.

Conductor: **Fabrice Bollon**

Soloist: **Alexander Krichel**, piano

R. Schumann: *Genoveva*, overture

C. Schumann: Piano Concerto

J. Brahms: Symphony No 3

Dear subscribers, ahead of each concert of the Belgrade Philharmonic Orchestra, musicologist Maja Čolović-Vasić will be giving introductory words about the pieces in the programme for that evening, at the Kolarac Music Gallery starting at 7.30pm.

Dear visitors, please turn off your mobile phones; you are also kindly reminded that taking photographs and the use of video and audio recording devices is strictly forbidden during the concerts of the Belgrade Philharmonic. We wish you a nice evening.

*In the season 2017/18, the Belgrade Philharmonic Orchestra offers an opportunity to selected young musicologists to enhance their professional training by writing programme notes.

Fabrice Bollon is a highly versatile conductor, internationally acclaimed both in the field of opera and within the symphonic range. His wide repertoire includes lesser known works of the 19th century (particularly French) such as the operas *Cendrillon* of Jules Massenet, *Pénélope* of Gabriel Fauré or symphonies of Albert Roussel and Joseph Ryelandt. Bollon, born 1965 in Paris, dedicates a certain amount of his directing for performances of contemporary compositions and has conducted a large number of premieres including works by Emmanuel Nunes and Mauricio Kagel. After studying conducting at the Mozarteum in Salzburg with Nikolaus Harnoncourt and Michael Gielen, he had his début at the Salzburg Festival with the opera *Satyricon* by Bruno Maderna.

From 1994 to 1998, Fabrice Bollon worked as Principal Conductor of the Symphony Orchestra of Flanders, with which he undertook numerous concert tours, CD, and broadcast productions. He then held the position of Deputy Music Director of the Opera Chemnitz from 1998 to 2003. Guest appearances led him to the Operas of Tel Aviv, Krakow, Lucerne, Amsterdam and to the Deutsche Staatsoper Berlin and repeatedly to famous orchestras all over Europe, such as the SWR Orchestra Stuttgart, the DSO Berlin, the Berlin Radio Symphony, the Residentie Orkest Den Hague, the Orchestre Philharmonique de Luxembourg, RAI Torino and the Orchestre National de Lyon.

In 2002 Fabrice Bollon conducted the German première of the opera *Pénélope* by Gabriel Fauré and the world première of the opera *Labyrinth* by Peter von Winter, for which Schikaneder wrote the libretto *The Magic Flute Part II*, performed for the first time in 175 years. The score was edited, shortened and supplemented with articulation and dynamic indications for the orchestra by Fabrice Bollon.

Selected highlights of recent seasons include re-invitations to the MDR, SWR Freiburg, SWR Stuttgart, Konzerthaus Orchester Berlin, Orchestre Philharmonique du Luxembourg, Berner Sinfonieorchester, Opera Maastricht with Barber of Seville, NJP Japan, SR-Saarbrücken and concerts in Amsterdam with the Holland Sinfonia and the Brabants Orkest. Invitations to France, Norway, Switzerland, Spain, as well as numerous CD and radio broadcasts make him one of the most interesting French conductors. In summer 2008 Fabrice Bollon also conducted two concerts at the Salzburg Festival.

Fabrice Bollon is music director of the Theatre Freiburg where he has performed the whole of Wagner's "Ring Cycle" alongside numerous orchestral concerts. Fabrice Bollon has also recently composed a work for turntables and orchestra for the MDR Leipzig.

Fabrice Bollon has been nominated three times for Conductor of the Year in the Opernwelt Yearbook. 50 critics nominate their favourite in 14 categories. Alongside Fabrice's nominations, his Freiburg Philharmonic Orchestra was nominated three times for the best orchestra and the Theatre Freiburg was nominated once for the best theatre.

In 2013, he was engaged at the Stanislavski National Opera of Moscow to conduct the first production of *Tannhauser* after they didn't play Wagner for 90 years. In 2016, Fabrice conducted at the famous International Bartok Festival in Miskolc, Hungary.

Fabrice Bollon was recently nominated for the Gramophone Award for the CD *Francesca da Rimini*, by Riccardo Zandonai.

Mezzo-soprano **Visnja Popov** was born in 1986 in Zrenjanin, Serbia. She graduated at the Academy of Fine Arts in Belgrade, in the class of MA Vesna Opsenica. In 2012 she enrolled in specialist's studies of solo singing at the Faculty of Musical Art in Belgrade, where she got advanced training in the class of Prof. Nikola Mijailovic. During 2014 received advanced training in vocal technique from Pro. Emeritus Biserka Cvejic. She also attended advanced training at the Opera Studio "Borislav Popovic", at the National Theatre in Belgrade, for two seasons (2013-2015).

While a member of the Opera Studio, she performed in the roles of Fennena in Verdi's *Nabucco* in 2014, and in the roles of Suzuki in Puchinni's *Maddame Butterfly* in 2015. In the same year she performed as a soloist in *Messa da Requiem* by Giuseppe Verdi at the Main Public Square in Stepanokert, Nagorno-Karabakh region. In 2016, she acted several times in the role of Maddalena (in the opera *Rigoletto* by Giuseppe Verdi) at the Macedonian National Theatre in Skopje, performed at the opera festival BELEF at the Kapetan Mišino Zdanje in Belgrade and sang with the Zrenjanin Philharmonic Orchestra at Liberty Square in Zrenjanin. Višnja Popov participated at IVAI Summer programme New York, where she worked with prominent American professors and professionals such as Ruth Falcon, Joan Dornmann, Mignon Dunn and Hemdi Kfir.

This year, she debuted in the role of Olga (in the opera *Eugene Onegin*) at the National Theatre in Belgrade.

She has also participated at various master classes of opera singing and has worked with Luciana D'Intino, Ljuba Kazarnovskaya, Lillie Ilieva, Marijana Mijanović, Jennifer Larmore, Djordje Nesic, Darina Takova and Roberto Scandiuzzi.