

Season 2017/2018

THE BELGRADE PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

The Philharmania(c)

Conductor: **Hans Graf**

Soloist: **Sergei Babayan**, piano

Thursday, 7 December 2017

Ilija M. Kolarac Foundation, 8pm

www.bgf.rs

Programme:

Igor Stravinsky

Funeral Song, Op. 5 (Serbian premiere)

Duration: approx. 12 minutes.

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky

Piano concerto No. 1, Op. 23 in B-flat minor

Allegro non troppo e molto maestoso – Allegro con spirito

Andantino semplice – Prestissimo

Allegro con fuoco

Duration: approx. 35 minutes.

Sergei Rachmaninoff

Symphony No. 3, Op. 44 in A minor

Lento – Allegro moderato – Allegro

Adagio ma non troppo – Allegro vivace

Allegro – Allegro vivace – Allegro (Tempo primo) – Allegretto – Allegro vivace.

Duration: approx. 35 minutes.

Concertmaster: Miroslav Pavlović

One of the world's most significant events in musical circles in 2016 was the rediscovery of Igor Stravinsky's (1882–1971) lost composition, which went missing at the time when the composer was at the beginning of his career. *Funeral Song* was written in 1908 as a memorial tribute to the death of composer Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, Igor Stravinsky's teacher and close friend. The piece was performed the first time in the following year, 1909, and then it was lost during the Russian Revolution. In the ensuing years, Stravinsky talked highly about this piece, referring to it as the precursor to his early masterpieces – the ballets *The Firebird* and *The Rite of Spring*, confident that it had to still exist somewhere in Saint Petersburg's archives. The search for the long-lost score lasted longer than a century, before it was fortuitously discovered in the archives of Saint Petersburg Conservatory. Its discovery and the new premiere in 2016 attracted the attention of the whole world. The piece is scored for a large, triple-cast symphony orchestra, with all the expressive possibilities that such an ensemble enables; it includes musical odes dedicated not only to Rimsky-Korsakov, but also to other great role models admired by the young composer – Mussorgsky and Wagner. Each of the instruments take turns to solemnly present the melancholic melody, like a moving procession *placing wreaths* on the tomb of the late teacher and composer. In the current concert season, the Belgrade Philharmonic Orchestra is one of the privileged orchestras which have been given exclusive right to include the *Funeral Song* in their repertoires for the first time in 2017 (the others being the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, the Orchestre national de France, the Czech National Symphony Orchestra and the Philharmonia Orchestra London).

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840–1893) began his work on the Piano Concerto No 1 in the winter of 1874. When he presented the work to his former mentor and a Moscow Conservatory teacher Nikolai Rubinstein, the two men had a fierce argument. Among other things, Rubinstein was primarily annoyed by the fact that the piece violated a few established rules of the genre and structure. The criticism often indicated his 'clumsy' proportions: the first movement was almost twice as long as the next two combined. The lush romantic melody that carved the concerto into the musical memory of the general population is presented at the very beginning, and never again. The lyric second movement is abruptly interrupted with a contrasting *prestissimo* section, simulating an inserted scherzo movement. However, the audience was not bothered by all these transgressions of composing rules and, shortly after the world premiere in Boston in 1875, when the solo was played by Hans von Bülow, the piece was included in the repertoires of many a renowned pianist, and has lived until the present day as Tchaikovsky's best known piano concerto. For years after the Boston premiere, Rubinstein had tried to repair the seriously damaged friendship with Tchaikovsky by subsequently including the piece in his repertoire and performing it until his death.

The third and final symphony by Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873–1943) was written 30 years after his previous composition of this genre, and was premiered in 1936. Although the critical reception was not warm, the composer was very proud of the piece, hoping that the world would come to understand it after a certain time and perceive all its merits. As if it were a prophecy, his wishes came true – 30 years after the unsuccessful premiere by the Philadelphia Orchestra under Leopold Stokowski, Symphony No 3 had its renaissance on the concert stages, which it still enjoys today. The work opens with a musical motto played by clarinets, French horns and cellos, which would return in each of the three movements and thus round off the composition. The second movement incorporates two opposing moods, delivered as two submovements – lyric and dancing. The finale is marked by Russian folk melodies and rhythms, which has brought the overall designation of the piece as Rachmaninoff's most expressively Russian symphony. This specific quality is exactly what lies in the heart of the Third Symphony, the piece that embodies the composer's nostalgia for the great Romantic era that seemed distant and forgotten in 1936, as well as the nostalgia for his homeland, which he was aware at that time that he had left forever.

Tisa Jukić *

The next concert of the Belgrade Philharmonic Orchestra is scheduled on Friday, **8 December 2017**, 8pm at the Ilija M. Kolarac Foundation, as part of the **Earth** series.

Conductor: **Hans Graf**

Soloist: **Sergey Babayan**, piano

I. Stravinsky: *Funeral Song*

P. I. Tchaikovsky: Piano Concerto No. 1

S. Rachmaninov: 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 pleasant 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.

Known for his wide range of repertoire and creative programming, the distinguished Austrian conductor Hans Graf is one of today's most highly respected musicians.

Born near Linz, Hans Graf first studied violin and piano. After receiving diplomas in piano and conducting from the Musikhochschule in Graz, he continued his studies in Italy with Franco Ferrara and Sergui Celibadache and in Russia with Arvid Jansons. Mr. Graf has been awarded the Chevalier de l'Ordre de la Legion d'Honneur by the French government for championing French music around the world as well as the Grand Decoration of Honour in Gold for Services to the Republic of Austria. In addition to his conducting activities, he is currently a Professor of Orchestral Conducting at the University Mozarteum Salzburg.

Appointed Music Director of the Houston Symphony in 2001, Mr. Graf concluded his tenure in May 2013 and is the longest serving Music Director in the orchestra's history. He currently holds the title of Conductor Laureate. Prior to his appointment in Houston, he was the Music Director of the Calgary Philharmonic for eight seasons and held the same post with the Orchestre National Bordeaux Aquitaine for six years. He also led the Salzburg Mozarteum Orchestra from 1984 to 1994.

Hans Graf is a frequent guest with all of the major North American orchestras. His recent and upcoming guest engagements include appearances with the Cleveland and Philadelphia Orchestras, the New York and Los Angeles Philharmonics, the Boston, San Francisco and other American symphony orchestras. Mr. Graf has appeared at Carnegie Hall several times with the Houston Symphony. He and the Houston Symphony were re-invited to appear at Carnegie Hall in January 2010, at which time they presented the New York premiere of *The Planets – An HD Odyssey*, featuring the orchestra playing Holst's famous work, *The Planets*, accompanied by exclusive high definition images from NASA's exploration of the solar system.

In Europe, Mr. Graf has conducted the Vienna and London Philharmonics, Vienna Symphony, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra and Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, as well as the St. Petersburg Philharmonic, Deutsches Symphony Orchestra Berlin, Bavarian Radio Orchestra, Rotterdam Philharmonic, Budapest Festival Orchestra, Dresden Philharmonic, Danish Radio Symphony Orchestra and the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic among others. He is also a regular guest with the Sydney Symphony, Hong Kong Philharmonic and Seoul Philharmonic.

He regularly participates in the Salzburg Festival, and has also appeared at other prestigious European festivals including the Maggio Musicale Fiorentino, Bregenz and Aix en Provence. His US festival appearances include Tanglewood,

Blossom Music Festival, Aspen Music Festival, Bravo! Vail Valley Music Festival and the Grant Park Music Festival in downtown Chicago.

An experienced opera conductor, Mr. Graf first conducted the Vienna State Opera in 1981 and has since led productions in the opera houses of Berlin, Munich, Paris and Rome among others. Recent opera engagements include *Parsifal* at the Zurich Opera and *Boris Godunov* at the Opera National du Rhin in Strasbourg.

Hans Graf has recorded for the EMI, Orfeo, CBC, Erato, Capriccio and JVC labels and his extensive discography includes the complete symphonies of Mozart and Schubert, the premiere recording of Zemlinsky's opera *Es war einmal* and the complete orchestral works of Dutilleux, which he recorded under the supervision of the composer with the Orchestre National Bordeaux Aquitaine for BMG Arte Nova. His recordings with the Houston Symphony include Bartok's *Wooden Prince* for Koch International; Zemlinsky's *Lyric Symphony*, Berg's *Three Pieces from the Lyric Suite* and Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde* for Naxos; and a DVD of *The Planets – An HD Odyssey*, available through the Houston Symphony. His most recent recordings are the complete works by Paul Hindemith for viola and orchestra with Tabea Zimmermann and the Deutsches Symphony Orchestra Berlin and a live recording of *Carmina Burana* with the London Philharmonic Orchestra.

Born in Armenia into a musical family, **Sergei Babayan** began his studies there with Georgy Saradjev and continued at the Moscow Conservatoire with Mikhail Pletnev, Vera Gornostayeva and Lev Naumov. Following his first trip outside the USSR in 1989, he won consecutive 1st prizes at several major international competitions including the Robert Casadesus International Piano Competition (renamed the Cleveland International Piano Competition), the Hamamatsu Piano Competition and the Scottish International Piano Competition.

Babayan has collaborated with such conductors as Yuri Temirkanov, Neeme Järvi, Hans Graf, David Robertson, Tugan Sokhiev and Kazimierz Kord among others. Over the years Babayan has performed with Valery Gergiev numerous times to great critical acclaim, including appearances at the international festival Stars of the White Nights, the Moscow Easter Festival, the Barbican with Gergiev conducting the London Symphony Orchestra, St Petersburg's Mariinsky Theatre, the Great Hall of the Moscow Conservatoire, the Théâtre des Champs Élysées in Paris, the Salzburg Festival and the Rotterdam Philharmonic-Gergiev Festival where Babayan was Artist-in-Residence. Babayan performs with the world's most prominent orchestras, including the London Symphony, the Cleveland Orchestra, the Mariinsky Orchestra, the Warsaw Philharmonic, the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, the Orchestre National de Lille, the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra and the New World Symphony (Miami).

His engagements and tours have brought him to preeminent international concert venues including the Salle Gaveau in Paris, Wigmore Hall in London, Carnegie Hall in New York, the Warsaw Philharmonic, Severance Hall in Cleveland, the Mariinsky Theatre in St Petersburg, the Herkulessaal in Munich, the Liederhalle in Stuttgart, the Meistersingerhalle in Nuremberg, the Konzerthaus in Berlin, the Brahms-Saal in Karlsruhe, the Beethovenhalle in Bonn, the Philharmonie in Essen, the Rudolfinum-Dvořák Hall in Prague and Victoria Hall in Geneva. Babayan's performances have been broadcast by WQXR, WCLV, Radio France, Polish Radio and Television, BBC TV, NHK Satellite Television and Medici TV.

Highlights of the 2016/17 season included recitals in Canada and the US; duo recitals with Daniil Trifonov in Princeton New Jersey, and Sarasota, Florida; chamber music performances in Los Angeles, and Fort Worth; and a return again to the Verbier Festival for a recital in August 2017. In the 2015/16 season, Sergei Babayan's schedule included concerto performances with the Rotterdam Philharmonic conducted by Valery Gergiev and with the Camerata Israel in Tel Aviv; performances at the Progetto Martha Argerich in Lugano, Switzerland; at the Edinburgh Festival in Scotland, and at Bad Kissengen, Germany; recital and concerto performances in duo with Daniil Trifonov at the Mariinsky Theater in St Petersburg, Russia; a return to Wigmore Hall in London; recitals and chamber music performances in Los Angeles; Atlanta and other US cities.

Babayan's recording of Prokofiev's Piano Concerto No. 5 with the Mariinsky Orchestra conducted by Valery Gergiev was released on the Mariinsky label in 2016 to great acclaim.