

Season 2017/2018

BELGRADE PHILHARMONIC

**Fifth**

Conductor: **Gabriel Feltz**

Soloist: **Benjamin Schmid**, violin

Kolarac Music Hall

Friday, 27 April 2018, 8:00 p.m.

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

Program:

**Alexander Borodin**  
*Polovtsian Dances*

Duration: approximately 11 min.

**Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky**  
Concerto for Violin and Orchestra in D Major, Op. 35

*Allegro moderato*  
*Canzonetta: Andante*  
*Finale. Allegro vivacissimo*

Duration: approximately 35 min.

**Igor Stravinsky**  
*The Rite of Spring*

*Adoration of the Earth*  
*(Introduction, Augurs of Spring, Ritual of Abduction, Spring Rounds, Ritual of the Rival Tribes, Procession of the Sage: The Sage, Dance of the Earth)*

*The Sacrifice*  
*(Introduction, Mystic Circles of the Young Girls, Glorification of the Chosen One, Evocation of the Ancestors, Ritual Action of the Ancestors, Sacrificial Dance)*

Duration: approximately 33 min.

Concertmaster: Tijana Milošević

**Alexander Borodin** (1833-1887) was a doctor and a chemist; he considered music as a "pastime, a respite from serious work." As a composer, together with the others from "The Mighty Handful" also known as the "Russian Five," he was devoted to creating music based on folk art. This group of composers maintained that the father of Russian music was Glinka, whose influence is recognized clearly in Borodin's master work, the opera *Prince Igor*. Even though he had worked on this opera for 18 years, his premature death prevented him from finishing it, and that task was carried out by Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov and Alexander Glazunov. The basis for the libretto was the 12th century Russian epic *The Lay of Igor's Host*, which recounts Igor's campaign against the invading Polovtsian tribes.

The famous ballet at the end of the opera's second act, the *Polovtsian Dances*, is based on Glinka's tradition of using ballet in the opera *Ruslan and Lyudmila*, in which the dance numbers had the purpose of characterizing the eastern world. The *Polovtsian Dances* are also performed as a separate ballet number, immortalized by Sergei Diaghilev's famous *Ballets Russes* company, choreographed by Mikhail Fokin, following the Paris premiere in 1909, which opened the door to the entire opera production. The work is also performed as a concert piece (without vocal scores), which gave additional popularity to Borodin's music.

**Pyotr Ilich Tchaikovsky** (1840-1893), a contemporary of the *Russian Five*, composed his Concerto for Violin and Orchestra just after completing his Fourth Symphony, in the spring of 1878. Even though the concert became known as one of the most effective and popular in violin literature, the composer faced many problems before his work was performed and recognized as valuable. Initially Tchaikovsky was not satisfied with the second movement, so he wrote a completely new *Andante*, which, as he said, "was more suitable for the other concerto movements." After finishing the concerto, Tchaikovsky sent it to renowned violin virtuoso Leopold Auer, to whom it had been originally dedicated. However, Auer sent it back on the grounds that it was full of technical problems and that it was "unplayable." The concerto had its premiere only three years later, when it was performed in Vienna by German violinist Adolf Brodsky, under the baton of Hans Richter. Critical reaction was mixed. The influential critic Eduard Hanslick called it "long and pretentious" and said that it "brought us face to face with the revolting thought that music can exist which stinks to the ear." Brodsky, to whom the work was later dedicated, was not discouraged by these words, and he continued to promote and perform the concerto, which in time became a staple part of the classic repertoire.

Tchaikovsky wrote this concerto as a traditional three-movement piece with a fast-slow-fast tempo. The lyrical first part gives the soloist an opportunity to show his/her enviable performance skills, and the composer described its content as a "triumph of life over death." In the melancholy second movement he gave a leading role to woodwinds, while the energetic final movement features folk dance rhythms.

*The Rite of Spring* by **Igor Stravinsky** (1882-1971), which was premiered in Paris in 1913, is known as the piece that caused probably the greatest musical scandal of the 20th century. Even though the ballet was Stravinsky's third collaboration with Sergei Diaghilev, which had been very successful with the performance of the acclaimed *Firebird* (1910) and *Petrushka* (1911), the public's negative reaction was so loud that it almost disabled the performance. The reaction of shock was not caused only by the hitherto inconceivable music, performed by a huge orchestra, but also by the unusual "barbaric" choreography by Nijinsky, and the "primitive" costumes designed by Nicholas Roerich.

In *The Rite of Spring* Stravinsky showed the pagan ritual of celebrating the advent of spring and sacrificing a young girl who dances herself to death. The ballet consists of thirteen episodes in two parts - *Adoration of the Earth* and *The Sacrifice*, and the composer described it as "a musical-choreographic work, representing pagan Russia ... unified by a single idea: the mystery and great surge

of the creative power of spring". Stravinsky portrayed spring with the primordial power of rhythm and an exceptional energy. The anti-romanticist orchestration, layers of ostinato, polytonal and polymodal harmony, unanticipated accents and irregular rhythms, create a tension that has attracted and intrigued audiences for more than a century. That is why *The Rite of Spring* has been recognized as a turning point in music and has influenced numerous authors, including Olivier Messiaen, Edgard Varèse, and Aaron Copland.

\*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.