

Season 2017/2018

BELGRADE PHILHARMONIC

FIRE

Conductor: **Daniel Raiskin**

Soloist: **Alexander Gavrylyuk**, piano

Opening of NOMUS, Novi Sad, Serbian National Theater, *Jovan Djordjević* Stage; Thursday, 19 April 2018, at 8:00 p.m.

Kolarac Music Hall, Friday, 20 April 2018, at 8:00 p.m.

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Program:

Igor Stravinsky: *Fireworks*

Duration: 4 min.

Sergei Rachmaninoff: *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra No. 3*

Allegro ma non tanto

Intermezzo: Adagio

Finale: Alla breve

Duration: 45 min.

Igor Stravinsky: *Firebird*, ballet in two scenes (1910)

Introduction

First Tableau

The Enchanted Garden of Kastchei

Appearance of the Firebird, Pursued by Prince Ivan

Dance of the Firebird

Capture of the Firebird by Prince Ivan

Supplication of the Firebird

Appearance of the Thirteen Enchanted Princesses

The Princesses' Game with the Golden Apples. Scherzo

Sudden Appearance of Prince Ivan

Khorovod (Round Dance) of the Princesses

Daybreak

Prince Ivan Penetrates Kastchei's Palace

Magic Carillon, Appearance of Kastchei's Monster Guardians, and Capture of Prince Ivan

Arrival of Kastchei the Immortal

Dialogue of Kastchei and Prince Ivan

(Intercession of the Princesses)

Appearance of the Firebird

Dance of Kastchei's Retinue, Enchanted by the Firebird

Infernal Dance of All Kastchei's Subjects

Lullaby

Kastchei's Awakening

Kastchei's Death

Profound Darkness

Second Tableau

Disappearance of Kastchei's Palace and Magical Creations, Return to Life of the Petrified Knights, General Rejoicing

Duration: 45 min.

Concertmaster: Miroslav Pavlović

Even though basically a scherzo, the composition **Fireworks** is often referred to as an orchestral fantasy. **Igor Stravinsky** (1882-1971), one of the most significant and influential composers of the 20th century, wrote this piece in 1908. Stravinsky was born in 1882 in a suburb of St. Petersburg, in a well-to-do family. His father Fyodor was a renowned bass-baritone, one of the best in his generation. Since his earliest childhood, Igor was surrounded by books, notes, concerts, ballet, and opera. By eight he got his first lessons in piano, as well as counterpoint and harmony, and as he mastered the skill of improvising, so grew his interest in composing. Fulfilling the wishes of his parents, Stravinsky unwillingly enrolled into law school, but already in 1902, following his dream of music, he forged a firm friendship with Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, undoubtedly Russia's most significant figure in the world of music at that time.

Out of respect for his great teacher, Stravinsky composed *Fireworks* as a wedding gift for Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov's daughter Nadezhda. With a penetrating rhythm, irregular and unexpected rhythmic accents, contrasting instrumental colors, *Fireworks* is one of Stravinsky's earliest successful and at the same time most mature works in the phase of his creative opus in Russia. It shows a clear influence of Rimsky-Korsakov, as well as Tchaikovsky, Dukas' *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*, and Debussy's *Nocturnes*. Finally, *Fireworks* is the piece that fanned the fire that sparked *The Firebird*, a work that was to firmly position Igor Stravinsky as Russia's most talented young composer.

Through his four piano concertos, **Sergei Rachmaninoff** (1873-1943), Russia's last great romanticist, gave a significant contribution to piano literature. Particularly popular was his **Piano Concerto No. 3 in D minor**, written in 1909, which Rachmaninoff, himself a superb pianist, premiered in New York City that same year. Of all his piano concertos, he was particularly fond of this one, which became widely popular only about 20 years later, mainly owing to pianist Vladimir Horowitz, a great friend and admirer of Sergei Rachmaninoff.

With a reputation among pianists as one of the most technically challenging piano concertos in the standard classical repertoire, *Concerto No. 3 for Piano and Orchestra* begins with a familiar theme in a dialogue between the piano and the orchestra. Through three movements, with the inimitably dazzling cadenza in the first movement, Rachmaninoff adheres to the conventional piano concerto model. With his technical brilliance and exuberance he stays on the lines of the great composers of the 19th century, such as Frédéric Chopin and Franz symphonic sound of Johannes Brahms.

The Firebird is the first ballet by **Igor Stravinsky**, which mainly owes its creation to the composition that opened the concert evening, *Fireworks*. In February 1909, two of Stravinsky's orchestral works, the *Scherzo fantastique* and *Fireworks* were performed at a concert in Saint Petersburg, where they were heard by famous ballet impresario Serge Diaghilev, who enthusiastically offered Stravinsky to carry out orchestrations of some of Chopin's compositions for the *Ballets Russes* company and then to compose a full-length ballet score. Stravinsky agreed, and the *Firebird* was premiered in Paris on 25 June 1910, marking the start of a long period of collaboration between Diaghilev and Stravinsky, resulting in the masterpieces *Petrushka* and the *Rite of Spring* and his successful and illustrious career in Europe and later in the world.

The theme of this piece is inspired by an old folk tale. Its hero, Prince Ivan, while hunting in the forest, strays into the magical realm of the evil Kastchei the Deathless. Ivan chases and captures the Firebird who begs for her life and offers to help him in exchange for his freedom. Prince Ivan then meets thirteen princesses who are under the spell of Kastchei and falls in love with one of them. He decides to confront Kastchei and ask for her hand. They begin quarrelling and Kastchei sends his minions after Ivan, who summons the Firebird. She bewitches the monsters, making them dance. The creatures and Kastchei then fall into a deep sleep, but Kastchei awakens and is killed by the Firebird. With the spell

broken, the magical creatures that Kastchei held captive are freed and the palace disappears. All of the "real" beings, including the princesses, awaken and with one final hint of the Firebird's music, celebrate their victory.

Stravinsky also arranged three *Firebird* suites for concert performance, which date from 1911, 1919, and 1945.

Marija Kostić*

*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.