

2017-2018 Season

Belgrade Philharmonic

Series: *Fifth*

Conductor: **John Axelrod**

Soloist: **David Guerrier**, trumpet and horn

Kolarac Concert Hall

Friday, 15 June, 2018, 8:00 p.m.

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John Williams
Star Wars, suite

Main Title
Princess Leia's Theme
Cantina Band
The Imperial March (Darth Vader's Theme)

Duration: approx. 17 min

Carl Maria von Weber

Concertino for Horn and Orchestra in E Minor, Op. 45

Duration: approx. 15 min

Henri Tomasi

Concerto for Trumpet and Orchestra

Allegro et Cadence
Nocturne: Andantino
Finale: Giocoso – Allegro

Duration: approx. 15 min

Richard Strauss

Thus Spake Zarathustra, Op. 30

Duration: approx. 15 min

Concertmaster: Miroslav Pavlović

The sound universe that **John Williams** (1932) created when he composed the music for the blockbuster sci-fi series **Star Wars** by George Lucas can be perceived as a tribute to a host of composers. The ramified leitmotif network involving various characters, events, or objects, the technique of transforming motifs in relation to the action, in addition to exceptional orchestration, harks back to Wagner's musical drama as a starting point of Williams's film music. In this music we hear equally the echo of the musical thought of Gustav Holst, Richard Strauss, Erich Korngold, or, for example, Igor Stravinsky. The orchestral suite contains the most famous musical themes that appear for the first time in *A New Hope* (1977) and *The Empire Strikes Back* (1980). The initial Star Wars main theme, which is also Luke Skywalker's theme, which is heroic, stately, and adventurous, is followed by the quieter, gentle theme of Princess Leia, the strong heroine, in a solo horn section. The *Cantina Band*, with elements of jazz, is followed by the *Imperial March* - with obvious references to *Mars* from Holst's *The Planets* (1914-1916) and the funeral march from Chopin's *Piano Sonata No. 2 Op. 35* (1837-1839) - portraying Darth Vader and the evil and tyrannical Empire through a rhythmical component and a dark instrumental and harmonic color.

Based on the tradition cultivated by the Vienna classics, **Carl Maria von Weber** (1786-1826) composed his **Concertino** for natural horn (without valves). The first version from 1806, which has not been preserved, the composer revised in 1815. Even though it consists of only one movement, this work, with a typically Romantic sensibility, can be divided into four segments: introduction, theme with variations, recitative, and polonaise. Some claim that the recitative was written during his work on another version of the concertino, since it contains similarities with certain procedures applied in his concertos for clarinet and bassoon from 1811. Apart from the innovative treatment of the solo section as an opera voice, in his *recitative cadence* Weber demands a technique known as multiphonics, requiring that the player produce what is in effect a four-note chord using the interplay between humming and the sound from the instrument. On the other hand, the polonaise is rich in trills and interpretatively demanding passages, achieving the work's *tour de force*. In Weber's subsequent works the horn was to have an important role, particularly with a dramatic significance in his operas *The Marksman* (1821) and *Oberon* (1826).

In viewing the opus of French composer **Henri Tomasi** (1901-1971), we discover a significant penchant for wind instruments, expressed primarily in a concert genre. Toward the end of his life the author said that in his **Concerto for Trumpet and Orchestra** (1848), which, as it turned out, was his most popular work, he had "tried to make a synthesis of all the expressive and technical possibilities of the trumpet, from Bach up to the present including Jazz." Quite untypically, the concerto opens with a solo cadence, more precisely a fanfare motif; however, the work is not dominated by such a character but by the one clearly recognized in the second, introverted and melancholy theme, which reveals the composer's lyrical nature. Following the culmination of the first movement, personified in a new, more complex cadence, comes the middle movement, which brings a *nocturne* atmosphere with its (post)impressionist orchestration and harmony. The search for a variety of sound colors has caused the use of different kinds of sordinos, creating the impression that the trumpet sound is coming from afar, as well as the specific treatment of percussion instruments during the composition. The finale requires great virtuosity by the soloist, which is why the composer's contemporaries felt that it was not possible to perform this concert, which Tomasi had defined as "pure music" with "neither subject nor central theme."

Just before the premiere of his tone poem **Thus Spake Zarathustra** in Frankfurt in November of 1896, **Richard Strauss** (1864-1949) wrote to his wife: "this is by far the most important of all my pieces, the most perfect in form, the richest in content and the most individual in character..." Even though inspired by Friedrich Nietzsche's philosophical novel of the same name (1883-1885), or, the "book for everyone and for no one," Strauss did not intend to write philosophical music or to portray in music Nietzsche's great work. Instead, his intention was, as he himself explained, to "convey by

means of music an idea of the development of the human race from its origin through the various phases of its development, both religious [presented as a Credo] and scientific [presented as a fugue] up to Nietzsche's idea of the 'Superman'." That is why in this preformed and very specific work, which reflects a *fin de siècle* spirit, and at the same time leads into the musical language of the 20th century, the author points out, with a consistent tonal ambivalence, the eternal existence of opposites between pure, unchanging nature and the imperfect human who is in a state of permanent development and quest for the meaning of life. The most famous part of the tone poem is the rising of the sun - the thematic material of dawn used by Stanley Kubrick in his *2001- A Space Odyssey* (1968), a film that significantly inspired George Lucas in creating his vision of *Star Wars*.

Marija Tomić*

*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.