

2017-2018 Season

BELGRADE PHILHARMONIC

Series: Earth

Conductor: **Eiji Oue**

Soloist: **Simone Rubino**, percussion

Collegium Musicum Academic Choir

Kolarac Concert Hall

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

www.bgf.rs

Program:

Tōru Takemitsu

Requiem for Strings

Duration: approx. 8 min.

Avner Dorman

Frozen in Time

I *Indoafrica*

II *Eurasia*

III *The Americas*

Duration: approx. 28 min.

Gustav Holst

The Planets

I Mars, the Bringer of War

II Venus, the Bringer of Peace

III Mercury, the Winged Messenger

IV Jupiter, the Bringer of Jollity

V Saturn, the Bringer of Old Age

VI Uranus, the Magician

VII Neptune, the Mystic

Duration: approx. 49 min.

Concertmaster: Tijana Milošević

Tōru Takemitsu (1930-1996) is one of the most influential 20th-century Japanese composers, whose early works were characterized by a desire to distance himself from traditional Japanese music and embrace genres, expressive means and performance devices of Occidental music. A crucial chance encounter with Igor Stravinsky in 1958 determined Takemitsu's future as a world-renowned composer. Stravinsky heard his *Requiem* for string orchestra (1957) during a visit to Japan in 1958 and expressed his admiration for the work, praising its "sincerity" and "passionate" writing. The composition's language is close to the free atonality of the Second Viennese School, although Takemitsu was never merely a faithful supporter of Western musical practice: his work can be considered as a *mirror on the water's surface*, whose reflections are never complete, or perfect. Elements of Japanese tradition are woven into the musical text, like the idea that *sound must have room to breathe*. This type of specific treatment of music material also gives the listener a feeling of static and creates a space with *zero gravity* in which sounds seem to float. All three sections, *Lento*, *Modère*, and *Moins Lent*, seem to be like frozen fragments of time; the essence of the music should be sought in the subtle changes of harmony and delicate connections between the groups of string instruments.

A literal follow-up to the idea of music frozen in time is the next composition on tonight's program. The musical opus of Israeli-born composer **Avner Dorman** (1975) is a true articulation of the modern age, in which the influences and elements of music of numerous countries - traditional, as well as artistic and popular - touch and permeate each other. His works utilize an exciting and complex rhythmic vocabulary, as well as unique timbres and colors in orchestral, chamber, and solo settings.

Frozen in Time is an intriguing title that refers to the author's desire to make imaginary snapshots of the Earth's geological (and musical) development from prehistoric times to the present day. The main theme of the first movement is based on South Indian rhythm cycles (Tālas) and scales. The range of the theme is gradually expanded like a spiral, as it would in classical Indian improvisation. The second theme is based on the inner rhythm of the Tāla, which is also found in some traditions of West-African music. As the solo percussionist starts playing the theme on the Marimba and the Cencerros (a keyboard of cowbells), it becomes more similar to Gamelan music of Southeast Asia. The second movement is an exploration of the darker sides of the mega-continent of Eurasia where emotions run deep but are kept quiet (the movement mainly deals with the traditions of central Europe and central and eastern Asia). The opening bass drum rhythm (which is borrowed from the *Siciliana* and many of its reinterpretations in the works of W. A. Mozart) and the long high notes in the strings separate this movement from the outer ones in terms of geography and climate. Also, the fact that the soloist only uses metal instruments in this movement makes it colder and more northern in character. The final movement is a snapshot of the present (The Americas are, in fact, still one continent). Moreover, the mixture of cultures is a staple of modern America. The final movement is constructed as a rondo. The refrain represents mainstream American styles (Broadway at first, American Symphonic style in its second repeat, Mellow Jazz in the third, and Grunge Music - Seattle Style Rock - in its final repeat). The episodic sections explore other sounds of the Americas: the Tango, Afro-Cuban Jazz, Swing, and Minimalism. Finally, the movement includes a recapitulation of African, European and Asian music, tying the piece together, typical for Dorman, which is not just an essential feature of this composition, but also the wholeness of his creative opus.

The demanding solo part and the image of a single performer operating a huge instrumental apparatus (making it a kind of visual extravaganza), and the vitality of the music itself, make the composition *Frozen in Time* extremely memorable in every way.

Written in the heyday of the Great War, the impressive series of symphonic poems *The Planets* (1914-1917) by British composer **Gustav Holst** (1874-1934) has achieved a higher status than any other one of his works. The composition, consisting of seven movements - planetary portraits -

represents a meeting point between mysticism, ancient Greek sphere harmony, ancient Roman mythology, astrology, and astronomy. The musical language, which partially reveals the influence of the orchestra works of A. Schoenberg, but also of I. Stravinsky, with its wealth of ideas and skillful manipulation of tonal colors, inspired a generation of film composers following Holst. The tonal images of the imagined characteristics of each of the planets of the Solar System change in sequence without a predetermined narrative course that would unite them: from the loud and brutally dissonant Mars, to Neptune in a *piano pianissimo* dynamic as the last planet on the edge of the then visible universe, which stands on the fringe of the known and the unknown. The women's choir that joins the orchestra in the last movement, singing without words, takes a step into a world without nations or languages, directing our gaze and our thoughts to the vast unknown.

Tonight's program focuses on some of the world's most significant composers that are found off the beaten path of the traditional canon of Western European classical music, researching the music of many nations from the whole world, and then goes beyond that in Holst's *The Planets*, thus, by rounding off this year's *Earth* program series, shows that music is indeed an art without frontiers.

Tisa Jukić*

*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.