

Belgrade Philharmonic
Season 2021-22
We Have Really Missed You

Friday, 22 October 2021

Daniel Smith
Sergei Dogadin, violin

Gioachino Rossini
The Silken Ladder, Overture

Duration: about 6 minutes

Jan Sibelius
Concerto for Violin and Orchestra in D minor, Op. 47

Allegro moderato
Adagio di molto
Allegro, ma non tanto

Duration: about 31 minutes

Giuseppe Verdi
Sicilian Vespers, Overture

Duration: about 8 minutes

Ottorino Respighi

Pines of Rome
Pines of the Villa Borghese / I pini di Villa Borghese, Allegretto vivace
The Pines Near a Catacomb / Pini presso una catacomba, Lento
The Pines of the Janiculum / I pini del Gianicolo, Lento
The Pines of the Appian Way / I pini della Via Appia, Tempo di marcia

Duration: about 23 minutes

Gioacchino Rossini (1792-1868) was the most popular opera composer in Italy in the first half of the 19th century. He wrote 39 operas, mostly comic, of which only a few have remained popular to date. It is interesting that he composed his last opera, *William Tell*, at the age of 37 and that after that he did not write any operas for his remaining 40 years. Rossini wrote *The Silken Ladder*, an *farsa comica* in one act, as his sixth work in a row, when he was only 20 years old. In order to produce a large number of works, Rossini resorted to an almost formulaic approach for some components and a certain amount of self-borrowing. Regardless of that, all his works attracted admiration for their innovation in melody, harmonic and instrumental color, and dramatic form. An almost typified dramatic plot, in which a young man in love with a young woman climbs into her bedroom every night on a silken ladder that she lowers through the window, brings a handful of fun moments. Just like the overture for the much more famous *Barber of Seville*, the *Silken Ladder Overture* prepares the atmosphere that will mark the opera and is full of whimsical melodies, which contrast with different orchestral colors.

Finnish composer **Jan Sibelius** (1865-1957) wrote the **Concerto for Violin and Orchestra in D minor, Op. 47** as his only concertante work. It was created in 1903 and was initially dedicated to violinist Willie Burmester, who was to premiere it in Berlin. As Sibelius decided to perform in Helsinki due to financial problems and Burmester was not able to come to Finland at that time, he hired Victor Nováček, a professor of violin at the Helsinki Conservatory. Nováček, with Sibelius himself conducting, played very badly and the premiere was assessed as a real disaster. Sibelius then significantly revised his work, which was performed in 1905 by the Berlin Philharmonic under the baton of Richard Strauss. As Burmester was again unable to perform as soloist, the concertmaster "jumped in" instead and Burmester was so offended that he refused to ever perform this work. Thus, Sibelius finally dedicated his concerto to the Hungarian violin prodigy Ferenc von Vecsey, who was only twelve years old at the time. However, since he performed it for the first time as a thirteen-year-old, in many elements he could not meet its high technical requirements. The first recording of the work featured Jascha Heifetz, who considered it one of the greatest Romantic violin concertos. After him, significant performances were given by David Oistrakh, Nigel Kennedy, Joshua Bell, Anne-Sophie Mutter, Pekka Kuusisto, Gidon Kremer, Lisa Batyashvili and others.

The Concerto for Violin and Orchestra is described in music literature as an achievement that abounds in broad and depressing melodies, with occasional bright passages. The violin part is generally very virtuosic, but even the most technically representative passages alternate with melodic ones, while the soloist and the orchestra have equally important roles. The work is conceived in the classic three-movement concertante form of fast-slow-fast. The first movement is very melodic, but at the same time technically very demanding, the second is lyrical, while the third is the culmination of the whole work and is known among violinists for its exceptional technical complexity. Today, it is considered one of the most important concerto movements written for violin.

Sicilian Vespers is an opera by **Giuseppe Verdi** (1813-1901), which, despite its great success with the audience and critics at its premiere in Paris in 1855, did not survive the ravages of time. The theme of the French occupation of Sicily in the 13th century, which forms the background of the dramatic plot, was considered archaic in the decades after its premiere, while the orchestration skill shown by the composer was interpreted as innovative. Nevertheless, the overture managed to show dramatic unity by presenting three main themes. After a slight introduction, the first theme is the massacre perpetrated by the French invaders, while the second, lyrical theme represents the Sicilians accepting their fate and defeat. The central part is the duet between the French governor of Sicily and the young Sicilian rebel Arrigo, who does not accept French rule, which forms the backbone of this "opera in a nutshell."

The beginning of the 20th century in Italian music was a turning point; with the death of Verdi, the great era of vocal music ended and the instrumental genre, until then interesting only to a small audience, began to gain more and more admirers. The creator of Italian Neoclassicism, **Ottorino Respighi** (1879-1936), is the most important representative of the generation of composers born around 1880, who showed interest in giving old Italian music a new look. As an orchestral musician he happened to be in Saint Petersburg where studying with Rimsky-Korsakov he learned the meaning of color and orchestration.

That is precisely what makes the ***Pines of Rome*** the masterpiece in his *Roman Trilogy*. Each movement of the *Pines of Rome* depicts the appearance of these trees in different city locations during different parts of the day. The work premiered in Rome on December 14,

1924, conducted by Bernardino Molinari. The first movement, the *Pines of the Villa Borghese*, evokes the playing of children in the garden of the Villa Borghese, while the second, *The Pines Near a Catacomb*, brings a melancholic melody that gives the image of pines near a catacomb in Campania. Instruments in the lower registers depict the underworld of the catacombs, while trombones imitate the chanting of priests. The third movement, a nocturne called the *Pines of the Janiculum*, brings a picture of the evening near the temple of the Roman god Janus on Janiculum hill. The hypocritical gods open their big doors and gates, marking the beginning of the new year. A nightingale's song is heard, which gave Respighi the opportunity to include in his work the sounds of birds chirping. The final movement, the *Pines of the Appian Way*, brings the portrayal of a foggy morning in which the Roman legion is advancing toward the Appian Way to meet the new morning sun. Respighi wanted to show how the earth shook under the army's footsteps, which he achieved by using the tones of the deep register on the organ pedal. The work ends with the army's triumphant arrival at the Capitoline Hill.

Danica Maksimović