

Belgrade Philharmonic  
Season 2021-22  
*We Have Really Missed You*

**Friday, 24 September 2021**

**John Axelrod**  
Behzod Abduraimov, piano

**Dmitri Shostakovich**  
*Festive Overture*

Duration: about 7 minutes

**Sergei Prokofiev**  
Piano Concerto No. 2 in G minor, Op. 16

*Andantino; Allegretto; Andantino*  
*Scherzo; Vivace*  
*Intermezzo; Allegro moderato*  
*Allegro tempestoso*

Duration: about 31 minutes

**Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky**  
Symphony No. 4 in F minor, Op. 36

*Andante sostenuto – Moderato con anima, in movimento di valse*  
*Andante in modo di canzone*  
*Scherzo. Pizzicato ostinato. Allegro*  
*Finale. Allegro con fuoco*

Duration: about 44 minutes

Fifteen majestic symphonies marked the opus of **Dmitri Shostakovich** (1906-1975) as a composer, plus numerous operas, ballets, film and jazz music, and solo as well as chamber works. Although in constant conflict with the Stalinist regime, Shostakovich was at the same time the pride of Soviet music. Thanks to his successful early works, primarily his First Symphony, his name became known around the world. Seeking a respite from large forms, it was only after the Tenth Symphony that the composer briefly turned to a small formal form. On the occasion of marking the 37th anniversary of the October Revolution, conductor Vasily Nebolshin ordered a short, effective work for the opening ceremony from Shostakovich, who was a music consultant at the Bolshoi Theater at the time. Written in three days, the ***Festive Overture*** became one of his most popular works. This composition, which evokes an atmosphere from festive fanfare to wild galloping with a triumphant cadence at the end, brings brilliant orchestration, a stately and upbeat mood and strong rhythmic energy. A few years later, the overture was reworked for an ensemble of brass instruments, so even today it is often performed in that arrangement.

**Sergei Prokofiev** (1891-1953) wrote his first two piano concertos as a student at the St. Petersburg Conservatory. He had already established his style with them, which distanced him from the traditional ideas of his colleagues. At the premiere in Pavlovsk, his Piano Concerto No. 1 (1912) shocked critics with its dazzling and flamboyant technique. Prokofiev started his next work of the same genre the following year with the idea of achieving greater emotional depth as well as virtuosity. The premiere of his **Piano Concerto No. 2** caused an unprecedented scandal but also prompted different opinions. Encouraged by flattering comments, Prokofiev went to Western Europe, where a few years later he reconstructed the score from his head due to the music having been lost. Instead of the traditional three-movement cycle, the composer opted for a sonata symphonic form with a traditional structure. The tempos in the last three movements have minor differences and there is practically no slow movement. The only lyrical theme is unusually the first theme of the first movement, while most of the developmental work is left to the solo part in a monumental, virtuoso cadence. The scherzo in the second movement represents a *perpetuum mobile*, while the intermezzo in the third movement does not bring the serenity that it usually suggests, but somewhat of a grotesque march. The finale is a struggle

between the soloist and the orchestra with an inserted interlude and another lush cadence before the powerful dissonant chords appear.

**Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky** (1840-1893) wrote his **Symphony No. 4** in F minor, Op. 36 in 1878 and dedicated it to his patroness Nadezhda von Meck. It was premiered the same year, with Nikolai Rubinstein as conductor. The composer called it the musical confession of the soul and it represented the beginning of the creation of achievements that were characterized as deep psychological dramas. The main theme represents the struggle of man with fate, which he still wins. Fate is the main thought that passes through the entire symphony. The first movement brings a dramaturgical plot announced by the initial fanfares, as a metaphor for fate, which grows into a new theme of human will. Another theme, light and lyrical, is soon interrupted by the motive of fate. The developmental part is characterized by a conflict of motives of fate and the first theme. The dramatic culmination is dominated by the first theme, which at the end of the movement sounds like a victory of man over fate. The second movement is conceived as a broad lyrical poem and a melancholy break with an inserted dance section. Such an atmosphere, far away from the fight, continues into the third movement. Here, vivid images of life are diminished through various musical materials - a folk song that was once performed with a balalaika (pizzicato), then the melody of a street song close to Russian dances, and finally a new marching theme, brought by the wind instruments. "If you yourself do not find a motive for joy, look at other people. Go to the people. Look how they know how to rejoice," Tchaikovsky wrote about the music of the fourth movement. The author contrasted the powerful sound of the orchestra with the motifs of the Russian folk song *In a field a little birch tree stood*, which is transformed to the line of lyrical melancholy. It is replaced by the theme of fate, and again by the new theme of man who triumphs over fate.

Danica Maksimović