

Belgrade Philharmonic
Season 2021-22
We Have Really Missed You

Wednesday, 6 October 2021

Gabriel Feltz

Gustav Mahler

Symphony No. 6 in A minor

Allegro energico, ma non troppo

Scherzo. Wuchtig

Andante moderato

Finale. Allegro moderato

Duration about 80 minutes

In 1904, Gustav Mahler (1860-1911) completed work on his Sixth Symphony. It represents the central work in his most significant instrumental trilogy consisting of symphonies Nos. 5, 6, and 7, inspired by the verses of Friedrich Rückert. Although it was created chronologically, according to his wife Alma Mahler, in his "happiest days," the Sixth Symphony "foretold" the death of the composer's daughter, his own illness, and the misfortune of the whole family. The darkest of all of Mahler's works, it is the first of his symphonies to end in minor mode. Due to that, some artists who conducted it, as well as editors, dubbed it the *Tragic (Tragische)*, though it has not been fully established whether the composer himself left that determinant in the score. Mahler's works, especially his Sixth Symphony, are considered typical representatives of the *Jugendstil*, regardless of the fact that this term primarily refers to architecture, applied art and the decorative arts in general. The composers of the Second Viennese School considered it a favorite symphonic work, a supreme combination of the romantic and the modern, and with its harmonic language and abundance of musical effects, it has become the originator of the symphony of the 20th century. To this day, the symphony intrigues us with insufficiently known details regarding its structure and the order of the inner movements. Mahler himself changed their order at the premiere, but later, during his conducting career, he returned them back as in the original score.

As the true successor of Beethoven's symphonic idea, Mahler puts the dramaturgical focus on the final position in the compositional process. The first movement has the classic form of a drama framework with coral and a musical portrait of Alma in place of the second theme. In the background are marching rhythms that permeate the entire work, as well as the motif of the fate of the "hero" with the change of major and minor chords. The motif with three strokes of fate in some cases is performed with a wooden mallet, specially constructed according to Mahler's designs. The lyrical episode with the cow bells is the composer's escape from reality and life and the echo of that atmosphere will be heard in the third movement, which is the only one that is not thematically connected with the other movements. While the second movement is a variation of the thematic materials of the first movement with noticeable metrical inequalities (like the first steps of his children), the wide-ranging finale brings the battle of the hero with fate that defeats him with its last blows.

Danica Maksimović