

Belgrade Philharmonic
Season 2021-22
We Have Really Missed You

Friday, 18 March 2022

Hossein Piskhar
Julian Steckel, violoncello

Jean Sibelius
Night Ride and Sunrise, Op. 55

Duration: around 16 minutes

Ernest Bloch
Schelomo: Rhapsodie Hébraïque for Violoncello and Orchestra

Duration: around 20 minutes

Jean Sibelius
Symphony No. 3, Op. 52 in C major

Allegro moderato
Andantino con moto, quasi allegretto
Moderato - Allegro ma non tanto

Duration: around 30 minutes

Jean Sibelius (1865-1957), without doubt the greatest Finnish composer, was the subject of a controversy and conflicting opinions among music professionals throughout the 20th century. Mahler, for example, described his music as ordinary kitsch, spiced with a certain Nordic orchestral finesse, as with a pinch of national sauce. Despite numerous criticisms, Sibelius' success with the audience has never been questioned. Composers who created in the 20th and 21st centuries, such as Morton Feldman or Magnus Lindberg, had a very high opinion of his music. The visionary aspects of Sibelius' music, especially the exceptional unity of musical elements and the excellent handling of large forms, helped him to ensure one of the rarest qualities awarded to popular composers - the respect of the professional public.

Sibelius' most famous works include seven symphonies (of which 1, 2, and 5 are most often on concert programs), the *Concerto for Violin and Orchestra*, and several tone poems, with *Finlandia* as the most popular. One of the not so often performed but stylistically uniform, expressive and deeply moving works is certainly *Night ride and Sunrise*.

The work was created in 1908 and the composer was inspired by two sources: a visit to the Roman Colosseum and the experience of a striking sunrise during a sledge ride from Helsinki to Kerava. The premiere received poor reviews and spent almost the entire next century in the group of his least appreciated works. In recent years it has become more and more common in the repertoire of conductors who see the exciting character and psychological richness of the composition. Among them are Osmo Vänskä, Alan Gilbert, David Robertson, Esa-Pekka Salonen, and Sakari Oramo.

Symphony No. 3 in C major, Op. 52 was created in that same creative period. Written in 1907, it was conceived as a three-part symphonic work. Coming between the Romantic intensity of the first two and the more serious complexity of Sibelius's later symphonies, this is a cheerful, triumphant and seemingly simple work. The economy of musical means is obvious, especially in the first movement, and it is often directly associated with Beethoven. The work was premiered by the Helsinki Philharmonic Society, conducted by Sibelius himself. Although it is not one of his most popular works, Symphony No. 3 has found its place in the contemporary concert repertoire.

Between two of Sibelius's works in our concert program is a concert composition by **Ernest Bloch** (1880-1959), an American composer of Swiss origin. *Schelomo: Hebrew Rhapsody for Cello and Orchestra*, is the last work from the composer's *Jewish Cycle* - a group of compositions through which he searched for his musical identity. After finishing work on this composition, Bloch emigrated to the United States. *Schelomo* was written in 1915-16 and premiered at Carnegie Hall in New York on May 3, 1917. The soloist was Hans Kindler, conductor Artur Bodanzky, and other works from the Bloch cycle were performed at the concert, including the premiere of the *Israel Symphony*, conducted by Bloch himself, as well as *Three Jewish Poems*.

The word Schelomo is a Hebrew variant of the name Solomon, and the author uses the cello in the eponymous work to represent the voice of King Solomon. Bloch did draw inspiration from the Bible, but he received immediate creative inspiration by looking at the wax

statuette of King Solomon, created by Katherina Barjansky, wife of Bloch's friend, cellist Alexandre Barjansky, to whom the work is dedicated.

Schelomo is structurally divided into three sections, each separated by the use of different textures and themes in a cyclical form.

Years later, Bloch described the work as a psychoanalysis of his unconscious creative process, with the solo cello being the incarnation of King Solomon, while the orchestra represents the world around him, as well as life experiences. He also stated that in certain situations, the orchestra reflects Solomon's thoughts, while the solo cello shows his words.

Asja Radonjić, M. Sc.