

Belgrade Philharmonic
Season 2021-22
We Have Really Missed You

Friday, 25 February 2022

Gabriel Feltz
Akiho Tsujii, soprano
Alexandra Yangel, soprano
Benjamin Glaubitz, tenor
Lucas Singer, bass
Czech Philharmonic Choir Brno

Sofia Gubaidulina

Fairytale Poem

Duration: around 12 minutes

Anton Webern

Five pieces Op. 10

Urbild. Sehr ruhig und zart
Verwandlung. Lebhaft und zart bewegt
Rückkehr. Sehr Langsam und äußerst ruhig
Erinnerung. Fließend, äußerst zart
Seele. Sehr Fließend

Duration: around 6 minutes

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Mass in C Minor K. 427/417

I. Kyrie
Kyrie eleison
II. Gloria
Gloria in excelsis Deo
Laudamus te
Gracias agimus tibi
Domine Deus

*Qui tollis
Quoniam tu solus
Jesu Christe
Cum Sancto Spiritu*

III. Credo

*Credo in unum Deum
Et incarnatus est*

IV. Sanctus

*Sanctus Dominus
Osanna in excelsis*

V. Benedictus

*Benedictus qui venit
Osanna in excelsis*

Choirmaster: Petr Fiala

Duration: around 55 minutes

In late 2021, a great jubilee was marked in the world -- the 90th birthday of composer **Sofia Asgatovna Gubaidulina** (1931), one of today's most famous artistic figures, whose works are performed by renowned ensembles around the world and published by the largest publishing houses. Born into a Tatar-Russian family in the Tatar Republic, she was educated at the Kazan Conservatory and later in Moscow in class of Vissarion Shebalin. Her first works were greatly influenced by her contemporaries Alfred Schnittke and Edison Denisov, with whom she formed the so-called *Moscow avant-garde*, but Gubaidulina managed to create her own musical language thanks to a circle of friends of musicians for whom she wrote by trying out improvisation techniques and acoustic experiments. Since the late 1970s, her work has clearly adhered to religious themes, which was not well accepted in the Soviet Union, but much more surprising was the misinterpretation of her aesthetics in the West. Her most famous achievements are the Piano Concerto *Intrositus*, Violin Concerto *Offertorium*, made famous by Gidon Kremer, the *Alleluia* for Choir and Orchestra, the Cello Concerto written for Mstislav Rostropovich, the *St. John Passion* for Soloists, Choir and Orchestra, among others. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Gubaidulina has lived in Germany, where she continues to compose very actively.

The *Fairy Tale Poem* was created in 1971 as a commission for the kids program of the Moscow Radio based on the fairy tale *The Little Piece of Chalk* by the Czech writer Mazourek, which is being performed independently today. It is intended for a small orchestra without brass instruments and with a prominent percussion section, and like many other instrumental achievements by Gubaidulina, it has programmatic approach. Interesting combinations of instrumental colors, striking dissonances, and harmonic compositions, as well as the prominent percussive technique of string instruments suggest her later masterpieces. The composer wrote about her work:

"I liked the fairy tale so much and it seemed so symbolic an artist's fate that I developed a very personal relationship with this work," recalls Sofia Gubaidulina. The music, written with great pleasure, can also be performed as a standalone orchestral piece without spoken text. The composer explains: "The main character of this fairy tale is a small piece of chalk for writing on blackboards. The piece of chalk dreams of drawing wonderful castles, beautiful gardens with pavilions and the sea. But day after day it is forced to draw boring words, numbers and geometric figures on the blackboard, and in doing so every day it becomes smaller and smaller, unlike the children who grow every day. Gradually the piece of chalk is in despair increasingly losing hope it will be allowed at some point to draw the sun or the sea. Soon it becomes so small it can no longer be used in the school class and is thrown away. After which the chalk finds itself in total darkness and thinks it has died. This assumed darkness of death, however, turns out to be a boy's pocket. The child's hand takes the chalk out into the daylight and begins to draw castles, gardens with pavilions and the sea with the sun on the pavement. The chalk is so happy it does not even notice how it is dissolving in the drawing of this beautiful world."

The beginnings of the work of the members of the Second Viennese School, Schoenberg and some younger composers, Berg and Webern, were based very firmly on the achievements of the late Romantics Mahler, Strauss, and Wagner. Primarily dedicated to the study of musicology with prominent pedagogue Guido Adler, **Anton Webern** (1883-1945) nevertheless focused a large part of his composing ambitions. In 1904, at the age of 21, he became the first private student of the already famous Schoenberg, only nine years his elder. The first piece of advice to the younger colleague was to avoid large ensembles, so Webern, under the watchful eye of his mentor, wrote about 50 compositions, mostly for small chamber ensembles.

Five Pieces Op. 10 was composed two years apart, numbers 1 and 4 in 1911 and the others in 1913. These are the last pieces that Webern wrote before taking over the Twelve Principles. The composer conducted the premiere performance only in 1926, more than ten years after the

creation of the work, in Zurich at the festival of the International Society of Contemporary Composers. It probably took critics that time to understand Webern's music, so they wrote praiseful, even enthusiastic remarks about *The Five Pieces* and some called the composer a "true musical poet." This concert brought him international success, the biggest in his career.

One performer of each wind and string instrument and several unusual instruments - harmonium, mandolin, guitar, cello, bells, and cowbells, which are interpreted as the influence of Mahler's Sixth, Seventh and Eighth Symphonies, never perform in a common sound. Here, everything is reduced to a minimum, even the form. The fourth piece lasts only six bars and is the shortest piece Webern ever wrote. There is no thematic or harmonious connection. The principle of melody of tonal colors learned from Schoenberg has been very consistently applied with examples of the same tones exhibited in series in sections of different instruments or their combinations resulting in a delicate sound. In the foreground are such pure musical components: tones, intervals, ostinato, rhythm, accents, dynamics, and tonal color.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791) left his two greatest achievements of spiritual music unfinished. And while the *Requiem*, as his last work, became globally famous, the *Mass in C minor K. 417* has remained in its shadow. Together with the *Requiem*, the *Mass in C minor* has a cult status due to its monumentality, but also due to the incompleteness and mystery that surrounds this work.

In 1781, at the high point of his creative power and the peak of his career, Mozart moved from Salzburg to Vienna, where he was freed from the constraints of writing for church needs and gained the freedom to write other secular works. The following year, Mozart completed the opera *The Abduction from the Seraglio*, the *Haffner* Symphony, three piano concertos KV 413-415, and the first two quartets dedicated to Haydn - all accomplishments full of life, happiness, and cheerfulness. This is understandable because for Mozart it was the happiest period of his life when he met Constanze and got engaged to her without his father's consent. Just then, he began the *Mass in C minor*, which stands out with its dark atmosphere and grandeur. Therefore, the real reason for the origin of this *Mass* is unknown, but it is assumed that it was an act of humility before the father and a request to accept her during their first joint arrival in Salzburg.

In fact, Mozart did not write the entire Mass and at the first performance on October 26, 1783 the missing parts were borrowed from other relevant works of liturgical practice. The performing ensemble was impressive: two sopranos, tenor, bass, double choir, and orchestra. It is assumed that the composer played the organ on that occasion and Constanze sang the part of the first soprano. The premiere was in St. Peter's Abbey in Salzburg, which has become a tradition of the Salzburg Festival, where it is performed every year at the same location.

However, the real reason was Mozart's hidden desire to be accepted and appreciated like his great predecessors Bach and Handel. Since in those years, despite the huge production, he struggled with a creative crisis and hidden desire to be accepted in Viennese salon circles where exclusively contemporary music was performed, his salvation was in reaching for the monumental works of Baroque masters whose techniques he revived. Bach's influence is thus seen in certain segments of the Mass, especially the double choir *Qui tollis* and the double fugue *Cum Sancto Spiritu*.

The reconstruction of the missing parts began only at the beginning of the 20th century, thanks to the German musicologist Alois Schmitt. From then to this day, a large part of the *Credo* and the entire *Agnus Dei* have intrigued many scientists, who have left over 10 versions. For *Et incarnatus est*, Mozart wrote down the sections of voices, woodwind instruments, and the bass line, while the string instruments, like the other choir of the *Hosanna* section, were written by editors based on other orchestral sections.

Danica Maksimović