

Belgrade Philharmonic
Season 2021/22
We Have Really Missed You

Friday, 29 April 2022

Marzena Diakun
Sergey Khachatryan, violin

Claude Debussy
Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun

Duration: around 10 minutes

Max Bruch
Concerto for violin and orchestra No. 1 Op. 26 in G minor

Prélude: Allegro moderato
Adagio
Finale: Allegro energico

Duration: around 24 minutes

Richard Strauss
Aus Italien Op. 16, symphonic fantasy for large orchestra

In the Countryside - Andante
In Rome's ruins - Allegro con brio
On the Beach at Sorrento - Andantino
Neapolitan Folk Life - Allegro molto

Duration: around 47 minutes

The poem *Afternoon of a Faun* by Stéphane Mallarmé served **Claude Debussy** (1862-1918) as a basis for a revolutionary work that is considered today as a turning point in the history of music. His *Prelude for the Afternoon of a Faun* (1892-1894) is the most typical example of impressionism in music: Debussy himself emphasized that the composition is not a synthesis of Mallarmé's poem but a free illustration ... through the decor in which the wishes and dreams of the faun move. The faun wakes up from a dream and fantasizes about nymphs; he catches them, but they run away. The faun stretches wearily on the sand and sinks into a dream full of vivid visions. Debussy called the work a prelude because he intended to write a three-part orchestral suite with the movements *Prelude*, *Interlude*, and *Final Paraphrase*. He abandoned this idea after a while and revised and expanded the originally conceived first movement so that it represents a logical whole in which the character and atmosphere of Mallarmé's poem would be shown to the fullest extent. The *Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun* was premiered in Paris on December 22, 1894 under the baton of Gustave Doré. Despite the music being completely new and original, the reception of the audience was very favorable. Although the professional critics were not so impressed with the work, it soon positioned Debussy unequivocally as the leading composer of his time.

In stark contrast to the rich orchestration of late Romanticism, Debussy wrote the work for a smaller ensemble, emphasizing instrumental color and timbre. The main characteristics of this symphonic poem are rhythmic variability and a very complex formal concept, where the motifs are very delicately developed and presented alternately with different instruments.

One of the most popular violin concertos is certainly the *Concerto for Violin and Orchestra No. 1* by German composer **Max Bruch** (1838-1920). The work was created in 1866 and was premiered on April 24 of the same year by Otto von Königslöw, conducted by the author. After the first performance Bruch revised it significantly with the help of the famous violinist Joseph Joachim and it is still performed in that version today. The revised version of the concert was performed by Joachim in Bremen on January 5, 1868 under the baton of Karl Martin Reinthaler.

The first movement is unusual, considering that it is conceived as a prelude to the second movement, with which it is directly related. The work begins at a light tempo, with a melody brought by the flutes and the solo violin performs with a short cadence. This is followed by a repetition in the form of an introduction to the central part of the movement, which contains a striking first and very melodic second theme. The movement ends with two short cadences, even more virtuosic than the previous one, and the orchestral *tutti* flows into the second movement, with which it is connected by a single tone brought by the first violins. The second movement is known for its famous melody, which is considered the heart of the whole concerto. The finale begins with an orchestral introduction, followed by the first theme of the dance character brought by the solo violin. The second theme is a representative example of Romantic lyrics, a slow melody that is repeated several times throughout the movement, followed by a furious culmination and a brilliant ending.

At the urging of Johannes Brahms, 22-year-old **Richard Strauss** (1864-1949) went on a trip to Italy in 1886, after which he wrote a symphonic fantasy from Italy. Following the idea of tonal painting, this work brings to listeners images of lush nature, but in a compositional sense it represents a novelty. Working on it, Strauss realized that he wanted his music to be a blend of programmatic and absolute music. Instead of a mere illustration of music, the four movements firmly rely on the form of a sonata cycle. From Italy is Strauss's entry into the world of the genre of tonal poetry, which he perfected in other works of the same genre: *Macbeth*, *Don Juan*, and *Death and Transfiguration* between 1886 and 1889 and especially later in *Till Eulenspiegel's Merry Pranks*, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, *Don Quixote*, and *A Hero's Life*. The first movement, *In the Countryside*, as a prelude, introduces us to the atmosphere of the summer landscape of Rome bathed in the sun observed from the Villa d'Este in Tivoli. The second movement brings the sounds of nostalgia, while the third is dominated by the whirling of the wind, the rustling of leaves, the distant sounds of birds. The last movement is based on a quote from the famous song *Funiculi Funiculà*, which Strauss considered to be a traditional folk song (the author later sued him and won). The joyful sounds of the tarantella, folk merriment in an orchestral *brio*,

entrusted at the beginning to bass string instruments, get closer and closer and in the end sound in the full splendor of instrumental colors.

Danica Maksimović