

## **Belgrade Philharmonic Orchestra**

Beethoven - Pastorale

Strauss - Alpensinfonie

29. September 2017 - Conductor Gabriel Feltz

Two different ways of admiring the nature, from the angle of two different eras – Beethoven's *Pastoral* and Strauss' *Alpine* symphonies are a logical choice for the Belgrade Philharmonic Orchestra's concert of the *Earth* series. The new season's opening concert was conducted by Gabriel Feltz, the newly appointed Chief Conductor of our orchestra. Former Chief Conductor of the Philharmonic Orchestra Altenburg-Gera and the Stuttgart Philharmonic Orchestra, Feltz will also be working in this position in the Dortmund Philharmonic Orchestra until 2023. Gabriel Feltz could be described as a suggestive leader with accurate and clear instructions, which the BPO musicians and the audience already know from some earlier concert of the Belgrade Philharmonic. It is interesting that this is the first time the German conductor has accepted this position outside of his homeland. In his first concert in the new season, he chose to introduce himself with the programme that he traditionally conducts in his inaugural concerts as Chief Conductor of an orchestra.

The only thing in Feltz's performance that might have seemed surprising is the choice of the tempo of the first movement of Beethoven's *Pastoral Symphony*, which was just a tad quicker than it usually is. This comment, however, should be understood as a remark related to personal taste, because the most beautiful aspect of this movement are actually the melodies, which, in my opinion, get more air when the pace is slower. Nevertheless, Gabriel Feltz's personal preference featured accurately structured phrases in which there wasn't much scope for their extension at the micro level. Instead, this movement rose to the logical climax with a clearly set vision of establishing well-known paradigms and their connecting into an organised whole. The gradual line of ascent was distinctly achieved in the performance of the second, slow movement, as well, and of course it was the same in all other movements. The naturalistic effects were not isolated as separate elements, and the portrayal of the storm sound just as it

should – like a thunderstorm emulated by, for example, a renowned German ensemble. It is about a well-positioned transition from a major to a minor key, which is achieved without a change of the dynamics, or with a marked improvement of this effect. A single unchanging dynamic line, and the expected effect is truly achieved – a thunderstorm in Haydn's manner. And, lastly, it would be fair to say that the performance of Beethoven's symphony was at a remarkable level, with a small comment that it could have had just a bit more volume.

As for Richard Strauss' *An Alpine Symphony*, conductor Gabriel Feltz managed to deliver the composition that comprises as many as 22 scenes of nature in a single movement as one logical whole. The brass section functioned very well and we could single out the fanfare episode as especially striking, while other scenes in which the composer strived to depict various natural phenomena were also very good. Similarly to the performance of Beethoven's symphony, the passage played by woodwinds also functioned very well. Despite an occasional error in reading the score, to which we will not pay much attention, the Belgrade Philharmonic Orchestra sounded well-rehearsed and enthusiastic. The strings played with an ease of movement and a fine roundness of tones, which this orchestra sometimes lacks. Most importantly, Gabriel Feltz's interpretation showed no divergence from the typical norms that are associated with this composition, which many conductors state as their favourite, likely due to the multitude of sound effects it includes. Nevertheless, Feltz succeeded in delivering some of the naturalistic scenes as logical parts of the whole, showing that he was very familiar with the structure of the piece that shouldn't be understood as the retelling of events from the nature, although such interpretations are not uncommon. Overall, quite a good interpretation of Beethoven's *Pastoral Symphony* and a memorable performance of Richard Strauss' *An Alpine Symphony* – I daresay after all that the new season of the Belgrade Philharmonic Orchestra under the new Chief Conductor Gabriel Feltz started off momentarily, hopefully with many more concerts like this to follow.

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<http://www.blic.rs/kultura/vesti/ovacije-na-otvaranju-nove-sezone-beogradske-filharmonije/zqblrnv> - Blic.rs

(Translation – Belgrade Philharmonic Orchestra)