

Gabriel Feltz Dirigent

PRESSESTIMMEN | KONZERTE

Belgrade Philharmonic Orchestra

Belgrade Philharmonic Orchestra | Glière: Symphony No. 3 („Ilya Muromets“) | March 2018

(...) Reinhold Glière's Symphony no. 3 in B minor, performed last night by the Belgrade Philharmonic Orchestra and its principal conductor, Gabriel Feltz. A few of Glière's works are played from time to time (...), Ilya Muromets is rarely heard in the concert hall. This was the first time the Belgrade Philharmonic had performed it and it is believed to be the work's Balkans première. What a treat we have been missing!

The symphony calls for a very large orchestra and is unusually long, lasting a little under an hour and a half (including pauses between its four movements). It has a very detailed programme which is surprisingly easy to follow thanks to striking motifs associated with particular characters and scenes. Glière wrote a long and detailed account of the plot. (...)

In the first movement we were introduced to the brooding atmosphere of medieval Russia and the main characters and motifs of the symphony (horn calls for Ilya, a brass chorale for Svyatogor) with some mighty climaxes. The second movement was the most remarkable of all. Here the hero encounters the brigand Solovei (Nightingale). There is an evocation of the forest but the peaceful pastoral transforms from a place of rest to one of danger. The chirping of the strings suggests insects; the flutes, oboes and horns depict birdsong, but the Nightingale here is one whose piercing woodwind whistle can kill. Almost imperceptibly the sounds of nature are transformed into a long sweeping melody suggestive of another contemporary of Glière's, Rachmaninov.

In the third movement we are at the court of Vladimir the Great of Kiev for a grand feast at which Ilya decapitates Solovei. Dazzling exchanges of orchestral colours evoke the pageantry of the Middle Ages with hints of Borodin and Rimsky-Korsakov and striking changes of pace. The dramatic finale gave us two exhilarating battle scenes. In the first, Ilya defeats the Tatar hordes and in the second he is defeated and turned to stone. There were flashbacks to earlier scenes and the theme associated with the pilgrims at the beginning of the symphony becomes the one for the invincible warriors. Even more astonishing was the quiet ending with low instruments predominating.

Feltz and the Belgrade Philharmonic had evidently prepared meticulously. The ever-changing pace was expertly judged and the work never dragged. Instrumental solos were lovingly shaped and emerged perfectly from the body of the orchestra. Feltz had taken us on an amazing journey through a Russian legend. Fortunately we will be able to hear it again: Feltz and the Belgrade Philharmonic are making their first recording together with this astonishing piece.

Bachtrack, 4. März 2018, Peter Connors

Belgrade Philharmonic Orchestra – February 2018

Do you believe in magic? The Belgrade Philharmonic Orchestra's latest concert formed part of a series devoted to the "fifth element" (ie the supernatural), with all four pieces on the programme having associations with magic or ghosts. Even if you don't believe in wizards and phantoms, the orchestra and its principal conductor Gabriel Feltz ensured that there was plenty of musical magic to hear. (...)

A quick glance at the booklet of concerts for the year shows great imagination in the construction of programmes.

Under Gabriel Feltz, the orchestra began with a spirited account of the ever popular *Sorcerer's Apprentice* by Paul Dukas. This scherzo for orchestra closely follows the story of Goethe's poem. The alternation of calm, anxious anticipation and frenetic activity clearly lends themselves to musical treatment. Feltz brought out all the colours of Dukas' imaginative orchestration. Pride of place here goes to the bassoons and contrabassoons which are given rare prominence, their players earning well-deserved acknowledgement at the end. Also, *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* is one of those few pieces in which the music itself can make the audience laugh and Feltz made the most of this.

The second piece marked a departure from tradition which I have not encountered before but which worked extremely well. Instead of another orchestral piece or a concerto we had chamber music: Beethoven's *Ghost Trio* (the *Piano Trio in D major Op.70 no. 1*). The performers were the evening's conductor, Gabriel Feltz (piano) and the orchestra's usual leader, Tijana Milošević, and principal cellist Nemanja Stanković. I do not know whether these three regularly play chamber music together but there was an evident rapport between them and they blended well, with stylish playing making every note count. (...)

Throughout the concert the Belgrade Philharmonic showed that this is a first-rate orchestra – which may be obvious in Serbia but a pleasing revelation to those of us from further away.

Bachtrack, 3. Februar 2018, Peter Connors

Inaugurationskonzert – Belgrade Philharmonic Orchestra – September 2017

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.

Radio Belgrade, 1. Oktober 2017, Srdjan Teparic

The Belgrade Philharmonic Orchestra's first concert of the new season (Kolarac, 29 September), under the new Chief Conductor Gabriel Feltz, ended with five-minute ovations. The Five Elements season was opened by the concert from the Earth series, and the programme included Beethoven's Pastoral and Strauss' Alpine Symphonies. In the packed Kolarac Concert Hall, the orchestra's season formally commenced with the performance of the Serbian national anthem Bože pravde. It was followed by the repertoire that Gabriel Feltz traditionally conducts when he is inaugurated as Chief Conductor in an orchestra. The audience had an opportunity to hear how two masters of the musical art bow to the nature. Beethoven was nature's great admirer, and his Pastoral Symphony testifies to this. Maestro Feltz and the orchestra painted beautiful images of the nature that parade one after another. Strauss' grandiose piece in the second part of the concert brought together 112 musicians, not only on the stage but on the gallery, as well, where the sounds of the nature were emulated by wind instruments. Vigorously directed by the Chief Conductor, the Belgrade Philharmonic Orchestra led the audience to mountain climbing on the Alps - an unforgettable experience. The audience breathlessly followed this magnificent voyage, which ended with a sustained applause. Maestro Feltz was overjoyed with the orchestra's performance of Strauss' masterpiece, which had originally influenced his decision to pursue a conductor's career. The Belgrade Philharmonic musicians are proud of such a monumental launch of the season, as witnessed by the multitude of posts in social networks.

B92.net, 1. Oktober 2017