****Czech Philharmonic

**Performances with Semyon Bychkov**

***“After the death of the orchestra’s chief conductor Jiří Bělohlávek, the management of the Czech Philharmonic was faced with a difficult question: whom would they choose in place of that irreplaceable person? Management and the players were in agreement: it would be Semyon Bychkov, who is enormously experienced with orchestras around the world, an acclaimed opera conductor, and above all a superb musician and a demanding professional who is a guarantee that the quality of the leading Czech orchestra will not fade. But what good would there be in high standards and professionalism without empathy, kindness, and a deeply humane approach to the orchestral players? That fact that Semyon Bychkov has these qualities in abundance will perhaps be clear even just from the interview that follows.”***

**OperaPlus, 28 November 2017**

Not only did the Czech Philharmonic get the country’s most important music festival outside of Prague off to a wonderful start but, it also confirmed that it is making its way to the centre of the world’s leading orchestras. As long as it continues to collaborate with figures like Semyon Bychkov, even the recent passing of its principal conductor Jiří Bělohlávek – who was honoured here by a performance of Nedbal’s *Valse triste* as he had been at the Rudolfinum – should not stand in its way. Hospodářské noviny*,* 17 June 2017

This week, the Czech Philharmonic is playing under the baton of its Chief Conductor designate, Semyon Bychkov. If Wednesday’s concert is any indication of the orchestra’s future under the leadership of this conductor, wonderful times are ahead. The orchestra played with focus and total commitment right from the start...

When Semyon Bychkov walked out to take a bow for the third time and signalled for the orchestra to rise, the players demonstratively remained in their seats and joined in the applause, in order that the conductor could first take a bow alone – this is a grand gesture of acknowledgement, and in truth, I cannot recall if I have ever seen it done before in the Rudolfinum and by the Czech Philharmonic. Promising signs, expectations, and mutual attunement seem to be at a maximum. OperaPlus, 7 December 2017

**MAHLER Symphony No. 2 *Resurrection***

Prague, Bratislava, New York, Vienna – October-November 2018

In its performance of Mahler's Second, the *Resurrection* Symphony, the Orchestra demonstrated its "special qualities" such as the massive, rich sound that Bychkov used in the huge build-up and explosions of sound that gave the first and fifth movements an increased sense of theatricality. The second and third movements were idyllic and dreamy, full of irony and pleasure in the parody... Bychkov's broad and demonstratively powerful conducting gave the performance weight. Kronen Zeitung, 29 November 2018

The performance of Mahler’s Second Symphony at Vienna’s Musikverein demonstrated that this relationship has much to offer. The long-established orchestra followed its conductor's emotional interpretation to the letter. The *Totenfeier* was monumental in every respect... The Choir’s singing of the finale completed a memorable performance. Congratulations.

 Kurier, 28 November 2018

In the final movement [of Mahler’s Second Symphony] which veers between dramatic turbulence and thought-provoking mysticism, the wonderfully rehearsed Viennese Singverein, the Orchestra and the exquisite soloists - Christine Karg and Elisabeth Kulman – achieved a perfectly balanced spontaneity under the direction of their conductor. The climax, however, was the "Urlicht", articulated with great intimacy by Kulman and sensitively accompanied by the Orchestra. It will be remembered for a long time to come. Die Presse, 28 November 2018

An overwhelming performance at Carnegie Hall... Now fair warning: be prepared for an excess of praise. Because if beauty can be overwhelming, at this performance, it most certainly was... From the beginning, conductor Bychkov made good on Mahler’s desire to create a symphony that was a ‘world‘... The players radiated a passion and intensity as they met this magnificent music as if it was a dizzying, glorious challenge. The fist movement was simply breathtaking... The next movements, all appreciated and enjoyed by me in the past, have never shone as brightly as they did here... Because what happened inside that hall, where Mahler himself once conducted, was *beyond* memorable; it was a gift to all who heard it.

 OperaWire, 1 November 2018

Deep feeling was conveyed solely through musical excellence and restraint. Remarkably, that proved no less true the following afternoon, when the Orchestra returned to Carnegie to perform Mahler’s massive Symphony No. 2... Mr. Bychkov worked something close to magic, completing slight rhythmic and sonic shifts that conveyed exponential changes in mood without losing focus or suggesting fussiness. The huge string choirs varied their sound bracingly, from dense earthiness to gossamer. And the brasses produced a warm, coppery hue... Often, this music flags under its own weight, leaving audiences impatient for the choral finale and its cries of immortal life. Not this time. If anything, those elegiac spasms seemed to arrive too soon.

Wall Street Journal, 31 October 2018

Mr. Bychkov brought forth a genuine sense of awe and wonder in his Orchestra players at the awesome events that were unfolding, maintaining the sometimes patchwork narrative of this ecstaic vision of the end of the world [Mahler’s Second Symphony at Carnegie Hall]. There was a crescendo at one point that made the hair stand on end. Super-Conductor, 31 October 2018

There are three orchestras considered great Mahler ensembles: the Vienna Philharmonic, the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra and the New York Philharmonic. But there is another that deserves to be in this company: the Czech Philharmonic. The Czech group always had a unique national sound, with bucolic winds and unusually warm, soft timbres coming out of the horn and brass sections. And then there is the landscape. Mahler is the sound of landscape, as is the Czech Philharmonic, and the two combined with Semyon Bychkov on Sunday afternoon in Carnegie Hall delivered an exceptional performance of the *Resurrection* Symphony. Bychkov's way with Mahler is natural in that everything seems just right — unforced, organic, even effortless . . . Conductor and Orchestra were precise and masterful about every detail in the score... This was Mahler delivered with utmost musicality, care and understanding. Every tempo felt perfect . . . dynamics were equisitely refined and shaped, with rises and falls that felt like the orchestra was slowly breathing . . . Around all this was the constant flow of the dramatic and musical journey of Mahler's anonymous protagonist. Beginning in darkness and finding its way to light, the unaffected naturalness of the playing delivered a *ne plus ultra* Mahler experience.

New York Classical Review, 29 October 2018

The Czech Philharmonic and Semyon Bychkov celebrated the centenary of the Czech Republic’s independence with a splendid performance of Mahler’s Second Symphony [at Carnegie Hall]. Classical Source, 29 October 2018

The conductor’s pacing of the work [Mahler’s Second Symphony at Carnegie Hall] was flawless, and there were long paragraphs of superbly layered sound from the Orchestra. The Symphony’s epic climaxes and their ensuing ebbing away were impeccably judged by the Maestro... Full-bodied strings and expert solo woodwind playing gave a great deal of pleasure, and the chorus played their part in the proceedings to wonderful effect.

 Oberon’s Grove, 28 October 2018

This was a testament not only to Mahler, but also to Mr. Bychkov and his orchestra... this was a moving and intelligent reading of the *Resurrection*, dramatic in the opening and finale, sweet and playful in the inner movements, and sublime in the setting of *Urlicht*... Let’s hope that, under Mr. Bychkov, we don’t have to wait another four years to hear them here [at Carnegie Hall] again. The New York Times, 26 October 2018

At the helm of the massive forces was Semyon Bychkov, the current Chief Conductor of an orchestra capable of competing with the world’s top-tier ensembles. The guest appearance by our neighbours left nothing to be desired... Semyon Bychkov plunged into the depths of this world, revealing its hidden recesses, and inspiring all of the vast forces to give a perfect performance. Kultura Pravda, 16 October 2018

Perhaps the biggest event of the year at the Bratislava Music Festival was Mahler’s Symphony No. 2 performed by the combined forces of the Czech Philharmonic, superb vocal soloists, and the exceptionally refined Prague Philharmonic Choir – led by the brilliant conductor Semyon Bychkov.

 Opera Slovakia, 15 October 2018

... the performance was sonically opulent, full of contrasts and sudden changes. The orchestra playing was concentrated and brilliantly colourful; the difficult solos for woodwind and brass came off successfully; and the cello and violin sections played with great expression, as did the concertmaster Josef Špaček in his solos.

The vast first movement [in Mahler’s Second Symphony] had several gradations of climaxes with crushing force in places. It was as if the conductor were setting the sounds of the individual instrumental sections against one another in a starkly contrasting dialogue. The Orchestra played their hearts out throughout... Lidove Noviny, 15 October 2018

The symphony was a reflection of Bychkov’s enormous musical intelligence and passion for music... The performance in Bratislava was unique, almost impossible to describe in words, full of emotion, and verging on artistic perfection. Opera Slovakia, 13 October 2018

Bychkov and the Orchestra left no doubt that a new era was underway with a glorious performance of Mahlerʼs *Resurrection* Symphony. Authoritative, colourful and full-blooded, it also had unexpected moments of whimsy and light, agile playing that contrasted nicely with the heavy intensity and high volume the conductor favours. Mahler is considered a native son in the Czech lands, but under Bychkovʼs baton his music sounded more universal and accessible without losing any of its distinctive personal dimension... In short, there was a lot of genuine bonhomie in the air. And the new team has already shown what it can do onstage. To borrow a line from a famous film, this looks like the beginning of a beautiful friendship.

 Bachtrack, 12 October 2018

The interpretation itself [Mahler’s Second Symphony] was first-class. The difficulties of ensemble playing with such vast forces, including the offstage instruments, came off without a hitch and the energy with which everyone was playing held the listeners’ attention, drawing the audience into the music ... iDNES, 11 October 2018

Magnificent Mahler with the Czech Philharmonic... Novinky, 11 October 2018

Bychkov structured Mahler’s Second, nicknamed the Resurrection Symphony, like a massive cathedral of music which, in accordance with the composer’s wishes, also emanated from the hallways of the Rudolfinum. The winds and percussion placed there sounded like harbingers of an earthquake, a fascinating divine mystery towards which we are all (perhaps) being drawn unconsciously. Bychkov paid attention not only to the expansion and reinforcement of the orchestra, but to the shading of individual instruments, so that they can be heard independently and from this emerges a harmonious, energetic whole... Bychkov also has a dynamic understanding of Mahler, and from the opening bars, the Czech Philharmonic accommodated him bringing out the subtle colours. The Orchestra's handling of Mahler’s hypersensitivity was tender...

The opening concert of Bychkov's era with the Czech Philharmonic might be a portent of a new direction. Clearly, the conductor will put effort into careful, detailed preparation and will want more variations of colour and tempo. He is not afraid of vast symphonic structures; quite the contrary, he will be seeking them out, because it is in their construction that an orchestra can show what it is really made of. Mahler’s Second showed us that we can have great expectations.

 Czech Radio Vltava, 11 October 2018

This was a spectacular opening to the new season!

 Harmonie, 11 October 2018

**The Czech Philharmonic** is on wonderful form. Hard work is bearing fruit, and Semyon Bychkov is certainly making a contribution ... There is an obvious resonance between him and the players. Already from the first movement [of Mahler’s Second Symphony], *Allegro maestoso*, it was clear that there was no friction anywhere. Bychkov had thought through the work carefully, as was clear right from the beginning.

 KlasikaPlus, 11 October 2018

The Orchestra played with a beautiful richness of sound [in Mahler’s Second Symphony] that maintained its vivid colours even in the quietest moments. In the Rudolfinum the dynamic climaxes gave the impression of an impenetrable wall of sound, but with no loss of detail. The conductor Semyon Bychkov built his performance not on empty effects but on a foundation of balanced, refined sound and subtle handling of dynamics. When the dynamic climaxes arrived, however, they were sonic eruptions... Aktualne, 11 October 2018

**MAHLER Symphony No. 9**

Prague, April 2019

Mahler's Second Symphony under Semyon Bychkov at the start of this season had a mixed response, but the Ninth was brilliant music-making created by a strong emotional connection from all the musicians. If this continuation is "tradition," Mahler's authenticity in Prague is being preserved in the best sense of the word. KlasikaPlus, 4 April 2019

**TCHAIKOVSKY Symphony No. 1**

Prague, Hamburg, Frankfurt, Düsseldorf – January-February 2019

The fact that conductor Bychkov especially admires this composer was clear from his interpretation which was consistently transparent, charming but never banal, and above all beautifully phrased. The flutes were remarkably smooth, and even more so the kettle drums – the piece is called "winter dreams" but there was nothing cold in this lively performance.

 Cellesche Zeitung, 11 February 2019

The second movement with its melancholic themes has the effect of everything being as one. The playing of the woodwind soloists was outstanding. One rarely hears such a soft, pure horn sound. Semyon Bychkov, conductor of the Czech Philharmonic since the beginning of this season, sculpted the quiet moments of the symphony with great sensitivity, letting go of the musicians for the great musical climaxes. The Orchestra thanked him for this freedom by making the tutti moments exceptionally organic.

 Hannoversche Allgemeine Zeitung, 11 February 2019

After the interval, the Tchaikovsky was presented very seriously, with measured and moderate temperatures for the "Winter Dreams" of the work's title. High praise for the Orchestra which left nothing to be desired.

 Neue Presse, 10 February 2019

After the break, there was a symphonic gem to discover: Tchaikovsky's rarely performed first symphony, nicknamed "winter dreams". Melancholia and melancholy are the prevailing moods in this three quarter of an hour, four-movement work. Although the symphony conceals an ambitious architecture, it is dominated by extensive landscapes of sound with large, organically developed arches of suspense. The Czech Philharmonic used their finesse for a rhythmically tight, yet poetic and dramatically broad performance.

 Nordbayerische Nachrichten, 9 February 2019

With Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 1, the Czech Philharmonic showed unequivocally what is hidden in Tchaikovsky's music: an inexpressible secret? Westdeutsche Zeitung, 7 February 2019

Under the proven direction of Semyon Bychkov, the Czech Philharmonic gave a finely balanced performance. Tchaikovsky's first symphony describes the comfort of being able to dream even in winter. The Czech Philharmonic’s very expressive playing made this easy: *Dreams of a Winter Journey* with its pithy melody and gripping rhythm showed that the young Tchaikovsky was a keen observer of emotion and passion; *Land of Mists* drew wonderful playing from the strings; the last two movements made one wonder why this symphony is any less well regarded than Tchaikovsky's final three symphonies.

 Frankfurter Neue Presse, 7 February 2019

The Orchestra played in total harmony with perfectly articulated phrases, playfully bringing out the individual themes [of Tchaikovsky’s Symphony No. 1] the strings played softly with a distinctive warmth as did the solo clarinetist in the second movement. Harmonie, 7 February 2019

Semyon Bychkov has a remarkable understanding of the final movement [of Tchaikovsky’s Symphony No. 1] and with his subtle use of percussion, flowing violins and woodwinds, built up to the striking ending which was both magnificent and sensitively handled by the conductor... The audience erupted almost like a huge orchestra and applauded the Czech Philharmonic and Bychkov enthusiastically. Online Merker, 6 February 2019

Some orchestras' reputations precede them. Such is the case with the Czech Philharmonic who brought only two works to the Elbphilharmonie but they were enough to show off their skills. First and foremost the shining, sparkling, intense and above all singing strings that shimmered with infinite warmth under the baton of Chief Conductor Semyon Bychkov, and repeatedly astonished in Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 1. Klassik, 4 February 2019

Semyon Bychkov revealed the universe of Tchaikovsky's soul [in Symphony No. 1] as the flowering of chastely compassionate feelings. I have never heard the tender grace of such incredibly beautiful pianissimos as emanated from the players of the Czech Philharmonic under Bychkov. This made the dynamic range all the more effective. As the conductor's baton outlined the structure of the music, the Orchestra played as if at one with the composer. There were no superfluous gestures. It was clear that the conductor knew every detail intimately and ensured that everything was played perfectly. An amazingly evocative magic was hidden within the music… Semyon Bychkov is unquestionably one of the most interesting phenomena amongst today's elite conductors, and the Czech Philharmonic is very lucky that he accepted their invitation to be Jiří Bělohlávek's worthy successor. Let's hope that as the Orchestra continues to perfect under his leadership, they will keep him for a long time. Harmonie, 10 January 2019

This was my first opportunity to hear the Czech Philharmonic with its new Chief Conductor. Semyon Bychkov'sconducting [of Tchaikovsky’s Symphony No. 1] was economical, creating elegant arcs with his arms to draw melodies from groups of instrumentalists and soloists as a magician would pull rabbits from a hat. Regardless of the dynamics, his gestures remained under-stated and fluid. Melodrama is just not his way. OperaPlus, 10 January 2019

Semyon Bychkov led the members of the Czech Philharmonic in a performance [Tchaikovsky’s Symphony No. 1] of this expressively melodic and richly temperate music that was accurate, unsentimental and straight-forward. The symphony was rich yet tender, beautifully balanced and full of many wonderful moments. KlasikaPlus, 10 January 2019



**TCHAIKOVSKY Symphony No. 2**

Prague – February 2019

The three concerts concluded with a performance of Symphony No. 2 *Little Russian...* It was incredible to see how the orchestra could feel the Ukrainian folk melodies as if it were its own. The long and demanding bassoon solo of Ondřej Roskovec was breath-taking which Semyon Bychkov recognised by giving him his bouquet. In reality, he had to divide the flowers so that at least half could be given to the first horn player Ondrej Vrabec for his solo at the opening of the symphony. They both really excelled from the joy of playing. It is clear from the mutual smiles and long thanks from the conductor to all the players in the orchestra, that relations between conductor and orchestra are good, that there is mutual respect and a real chemistry which is conjured up for audiences during performances, as it was for both these concerts.

 Harmonie, 26 February 2019

**TCHAIKOVSKY Symphony No. 3**

Prague – January 2016

In Symphony No. 3 in E flat major "Polish", Op. 29 there was even greater harmony between conductor and orchestra. The Symphony is really appealing particularly for its strong melodies, elegant dance-like qualities, refined style, its touching introspection a positive catharsis.

 Harmonie, 30 January 2016

**TCHAIKOVSKY, Symphony No. 4**

Prague – February-March 2018

After the interval, the performance of Tchaikovsky’s Symphony No. 4 was also a major event. Bychkov will record it with the Czech Philharmonic for Decca and had prepared all four movements with such impact and attention to detail that the symphony came off sounding like a new work, with all sections of the Orchestra outdoing themselves, especially winds and strings. It was a performance of total concentration and perfection, so it was understandable that the audience was tremendously enthusiastic and remained on their feet as if spellbound long after the performance finished. Hudebni Rozhledy, April 2018

Just as in its first recording for the complete Tchaikovsky cycle, the Czech Philharmonic was radiant under the leadership of Semyon Bychkov. Tchaikovsky suits the orchestra beyond measure, allowing them to show off both as instrumental sections and as outstanding soloists. The precision and consequent assuredness of Semyon Bychkov’s performance was a clear result of the Orchestra being well-rehearsed.

Although the composer’s broad melodies are a temptation for grand pathos, everything was amazingly polished, without any hint of excessive sentimentality or bitter-sweetness. There was smoothness to the sonic conception, favouring the inner voices, and even at the climactic moments, the sound was never violent. It was clearly audible as well as visible that the conductor knows when he can give the orchestra room, without limiting it with his gestures. Moreover, I have never before heard the musicians of the Czech Philharmonic play with such respect for the dynamics, such breadth and suspense, and with such great intensity, all the way to the very back desks. And you could see the joy on their faces. Decca could directly release a recording of yesterday’s performance of the Symphony No. 4 in F Minor, Op. 36. An awesome evening of music making. OperaPlus, 3 March 2018



We expect the wonderful solos by the players, many of whom we have long known individually and from other chamber ensembles. More surprising however, was the balanced, homogenous tone of all of the string sections, which played up the symphony’s extraordinarily lively dialogue. The second movement sounded touching and elegant, but Tchaikovsky also had a feel for instrumental virtuosity, as the pizzicato third movement as well as the fourth movement, shows. Aurally, this pure, concentrated performance, further motivated by the ongoing recording project, was simply wonderful.

 Lidové Noviny, 2 March 2018

The degree of commitment of all of the players to Bychkov [in Tchaikovsky’s Symphony No. 4], his refinement of detail, the unfolding of the ingenious score, and the manner of interpretation were extraordinary...

The core of the work is unquestionably the first movement, and from the opening fanfares of the French horns and bassoons, the Philharmonic players gave a performance of great intensity. Under Bychkov’s direction, the orchestra breathed every phrase. The Andantino was stratospheric. The opening of the solo oboe sounded delectable, and the orchestra responded to it with the utmost elegance! And then the third movement with the superb string pizzicato and the dialogue with the wind instruments... And, finally the fiery Allegro with its underlying folk tunes. And what caught my ear the most? The way the whole symphony breathed, how precise everything was, how carefully the interpretation’s architecture had been thought through, how the playing had all of the intensity of any foreign orchestra, and the excellence of the solo playing (Jana Brožková, Andrea Pazderová, Tomáš Kopáček, Jan Machat... ). Under Semyon Bychkov’s leadership, the Tchaikovsky Project on the Decca label could leave a timeless mark on the history of classical music recordings. Harmonie, 1 March 2018

A new Chief Conductor and a new friendship: the Czech Philharmonic and Semyon Bychkov understand each other...

Under Bychkov’s baton, [Tchaikovsky’s Symphony No. 4] sounded poised; the conductor took pains to shade the dynamics, and managed to sustain the music’s tension… Among the scintillating moments were the brass’s pronouncements of inexorable fate. Bychkov embodies a combination of meticulousness and relaxation, and he is obviously passing this combination onto the Orchestra. One definitely comes away with the impression that a friendship like that expressed by the concert programme is also growing between the orchestral musicians and the Chief Conductor which is certainly promising for the future. iDNES, 1 March 2018

**TCHAIKOVSKY Symphony No. 5**

Prague – December 2017

Once again, Prague is a city where audiences can hear world-class music ... The Czech Philharmonic deserves recognition for its courage in programming Prokofiev’s Piano Concerto No. 5, and the highest praise for its performance Tchaikovsky’s famous Symphony No. 5... The Czech Philharmonic’s playing was truly exemplary [in Prokofiev’s Fifth Piano Concerto]. This was surely thanks in part to the relationship between conductor and soloist [Yuja Wang], but I had a feeling that the orchestra was entirely captivated by the music and by her playing, and wanted to give her maximum support...

The highpoint of the evening was Tchaikovsky's symphony [No. 5] to which the conductor gave a more modern interpretation than is frequently heard: more dramatic, less rambling and more emotional. The public's long ovation was, amongst other things, an expression of faith in the Czech Philharmonic's future. Pravo, 11 December 2017

Tchaikovsky and Bychkov – are one. That is the feeling that I got from

their performance of the Fifth Symphony. The music had been rehearsed meticulously (and not only because of Decca's recording), but on stage it was simply par for the course, as if the recording were secondary. The chief attribute was the creativity that was pouring out of Bychkov, who was conducting from memory, and seemingly streaming forth from every member of the orchestra in their unity... quite simply, I had the physical sensation that on the stage of the Dvořák Hall there was a team that was committed to the best interpretation of the music possible... The evening of 7 December was one of the most powerful experiences of my year.

 Harmonie, 11 December 2017

. . . all the wind solos came off superbly, including the horn solo in the second movement and the numerous appropriately dark clarinet and bassoon solos. The strings were supple with a wide range of colour. Bychkov was clearly satisfied, and the players paid tribute to him over the course of the long ovation. The concert was full of refinement, and totally focused on the works that were being performed [Tchaikovsky Symphony No. 5 and Prokofiev’s Piano Concerto No. 5]. It bodes well for a powerful musical collaboration and the highest of artistic aspirations. Lidové Noviny, 8 December 2017

The second half of the evening amounted to a concerto for orchestra. Tchaikovsky’s very famous symphony [No. 5], perhaps the most rewarding of them all, makes a great impression. Semyon Bychkov’s interpretation is more dramatic than lyrical. He doesn’t allow himself to be carried away by long cantilenas, but rather concentrates on the detail, and imprints on every phrase, however brief, a tangible emotional effect. Under him, the string section sounded unusually supple, and its playing in the third movement was brilliant... OperaPlus, 7 December 2017

**TCHAIKOVSKY *Manfred Symphony, Francesca da Rimini,***

***Romeo & Juliet Fantasy-Overture***

Prague – April, June 2017; January 2016

Bad Kissingen – July 2016

Moreover, the Czech Philharmonic is currently on excellent form and trusts Semyon Bychkov. And, being battle-hardened from working around the world with the best orchestras on the planet, he gives the players of the Philharmonic the room to develop their musical potential. The result is a unique musical creation [in Tchaikovsky’s *Francesca da Rimini*]...

 Hospodářské noviny*,* 17 June 2017

Under Bychkov’s guidance, the orchestra played at times with metronomic precision (this sounded wonderful at the end of the first movement with its fateful “ticking”), and in places the strings had an irresistibly “steely” sound, while the winds shone. I would go so far as to say that the Czech Philharmonic is showing itself to be an ideal interpreter of Tchaikovsky’s music, not only because of its knowledge of the traditions of Dvořák (as well as of Janáček and Smetana), but also thanks to its meticulous tradition of interpretation, rightly appreciated by many foreign conductors. Tchaikovsky combines beautiful melodies inspired by the folk music of Eastern Europe with the compositional structure of the West, and this orchestra knows both these elements well and is able to react to them.



If Semyon Bychkov’s mission is to bring *Manfred* back to the concert hall, I wish him success. Either way, for many listening to the Czech Philharmonic that evening it will be a piece that they never forget, a fact that was confirmed by the quiet, as silent as the grave, that fell over the audience as the last notes faded away. Harmonie, 25 April 2017

The second concert of the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra began as Saturday night’s had ended: with great music. This time it was Semyon Bychkov who conducted the Czech Philharmonic, beginning the evening with Tchaikovsky's *Romeo and Juliet* *Fantasy-Overture*. Tchaikovsky did not focus on the struggle of the feuding families, but on the spiritual aspect of the relationship between Romeo and Juliet. Bychkov created wonderful sounds and a calm environment for the emotional worlds of the famous lovers.

 Saale Zeitung, 11 July 2016

The evening opened with the overture to the immortal love of *Romeo and Juliet*. Bychkov has tremendous charisma and a gift that convinces everyone in the orchestra to give their all. Rhapsodic and with constant pulsations, the flamboyant Shakespearean prelude took off. The attention to detail gave every indication that the conductor had devoted plenty of time to prepare. The Orchestra followed his every direction, maybe even breathing with him.

 Harmonie, 30 January 2016

**TCHAIKOVSKY Piano Concerto No. 2**

Prague – February 2019

Continuing his Tchaikovsky Project, conducting the complete orchestral works by Tchaikovsky, Semyon Bychkov conducted the little known Piano Concerto No. 2 with Kirill Gerstein, as well as Symphony No. 2 which was perfectly suited to the splendid Czech Philharmonic... The traditional Russian touch showed itself to be especially supple from the *Allegro brilliante* which, responding to the score, Bychkov conducted magnificently and vigorously without ever reducing it to an overly celebratory work… Josef Špaček, demonstrated the ever-splendid brilliance of the musicians of the Philharmonic from Prague – previously heard in the magnificent flute solos and reinforced by the solos played by the sublime first cello of Václav Petr... Semyon Bychkov directed his Orchestra with real freedom bringing out the most beautiful sounds from each desk. All without ever seeming to push for slightly more intensity to highlight the passionate moments. ResMusica, 27 February 2019

**TCHAIKOVSKY Piano Concerto No. 3**

Prague – February 2019

[Tchaikovsky’s Piano Concerto No. 3] was a huge undertaking for both soloist [Kirill Gerstein] and Orchestra, and the Orchestra rose to the occasion...  The performance was perfect. The sound of the orchestra was beautiful, rounded, steady and robust.  It was beautiful Tchaikovsky, and it would be good if this Decca recording brings this neglected piano concerto greater attention...   KlasikaPlus, 15 February 2019

**BERIO *Sinfonia***

Prague – October 2018

During the labyrinthine third movement [of Berio’s *Sinfonia*] that overwrites the Scherzo of Mahler’s Second Symphony with snippets of everyone from Beethoven to Boulez, the newly installed chief conductor Semyon Bychkov led with rhythmic precision while maintaining an air of old-school elegance, now wielding his baton with restrained gestures, now swooping in with his torso like a hawk... Classical Voice North America, 26 October 2018

At the third concert on Friday, the performance [of Berio’s *Sinfonia*] was not merely excellent, but also very relaxed and precisely coordinated thanks to the musicians having already played it. In particular, the eight singers of the London Voices were visibly engrossed with the music. The voices hovering above the orchestral layer created intoxicating soundscapes supported by simple electronic amplification. The layers were so lucidly shaped that one got the impression of observing the clouds in an inversion from above on a mountain peak. OperaPlus, 22 October 2018

The Chief Conductor led the music [Berio’s *Sinfonia*] insightfully, and the London Voices, an eight-member amplified vocal group, were wonderfully prepared with secure intonation, making their entrances in the rather complex structures with confidence. The Orchestra carried out the unusual task well, and the result was both colourful and interesting.

 KlasikaPlus, 18 October 2018

Berio [in his *Sinfonia*] conceived the orchestra and vocal ensemble as equal partners, creating multiple layers of music, but at the same time he made uncompromising demands on the individual performers. Semyon Bychkov was able to rely on both the singers and the orchestra to bring this off. He moulded them into a beautifully balanced-sounding ensemble... Aktualne, 17 October 2018

**GLANERT *Weites Land***

Prague – January 2019

[Glanert’s *Weites Land*] is a highly original work that is very impressive for its colour and dynamism. The music’s effect was further enhanced by Semyon Bychkov’s perfect feel for the score and the detailed preparations for the performance given under his baton by the ever more wonderful Czech Philharmonic... Harmonie, 10 January 2019

**Seeing the composer's visible joy when he joined the conductor on the podium, I would dare to** suggest that Semyon Bychkov's meticulously prepared performance [of Glanert’s *Weites Land*] with the Czech Philharmonic is a further important success for the work. OperaPlus, 10 January 2019

**MENDELSSOHN Violin Concerto**

Prague – February 2013

The Mendelssohn Violin Concerto was performed by soloist Vadim Gluzman, a young Russian-born Israeli... While the solo was being imagined perfectly, it was the Orchestra that created the true concert atmosphere. Bychkov demonstrated that the programme really demanded an opera conductor, and the soloist responded sensitively – like a singer. While at no point dominating the soloist, the Orchestra excelled, bringing out all the colours in the romantic score... to witness someone as composed as Semyon Bychkov in the middle of the season is truly an experience.

 Lidové Noviny, February 2013

Semyon Bychkov’s performance of the Mendelssohn Violin Concerto with soloist, Vadim Gluzman, was truly captivating. Following the interval Bychkov concluded the concert with an outstanding performance of Brahms with excellent solos from all sections. Právo, February 2013

**SCHUBERT Symphony No. 9 *The Great***

Prague – February 2019

Each performance had a different atmosphere, but they had much in common: the Czech Philharmonic gave a great and detailed performance under Semyon Bychkov, with excellent performances from Kirill Gerstein for whom it must have been a real pleasure to perform with such a well-rehearsed Orchestra.

And something that was very noticeable was the joy of playing that emanated from all the members, and the warm relationship between the Chief Conductor and the Orchestra... The highlight of the whole evening was Schubert's Symphony No. 9 in C major *The Great*. A bad interpretation of this hour-long piece can sound endless. The evening's spectacular performance would ultimately be heard several times and every time, one could find something new in it. The audience had the opportunity to reap the results of Bychkov’s long, wearying and precise work on the details and variations he initiated in the orchestra. The beautiful oboe solo from Vladislav Borovka, and the excellent horns, stood out for the purity of sound. Bychkov brought an incredible charge and tension to the entire performance.

 Harmonie, 26 February 2019

Franz Schubert's "The Great" Symphony in C major is one hour long and the audience would have been happy if it went on even longer... The Czech Philharmonic are very lucky to have persuaded Bychkov to succeed Jiří Bělohlávek.  He and the Orchestra understand each other perfectly, and Bychkov draws excellent performances from every section of the Orchestra.  The flute, oboe and clarinet solos in the first movement, alongside the trio of trombones in the second movement should get the most credit; the strings shone as they passed from pianissimo to forte, and the oboe solos were excellent.  KlasikaPlus, 15 February 2019

**STRAUSS *Ein Heldenleben***

Prague – December 2017

Although it would be easy for things to come unstuck, Semyon Bychkov gave the work a surprisingly firm structure, kept things moving as needed throughout the piece and got the most out of its magnificent orchestral colours. In this work [Strauss’s *Ein Heldenleben*], Strauss gives almost every instrument a solo opportunity, and to the credit of the orchestral players, it must be said that in the solo passages each of them, without exception, excelled. The star of the evening was the concertmaster **Jiří Vodička** – his solo (nearly as demanding as playing a violin concerto) was unrivalled and formed the centrepiece of the entire performance.

 Harmonie, 22 December 2017

Under Bychkov’s baton, the music [Strauss’s *Ein Heldenleben*] could be heard with all its post-Romantic pathos but with aural restraint, so that the audience was not overwhelmed by sound, but able to enjoy the playing of individual instruments, especially the violin solos of concertmaster, Jiří Vodička.  **iDNES, 21 December 2017**

**With Semyon Bychkov conducting, the concert was a success. A promising sign of what is to come...** Both in the innumerable solos and in the imposing tuttis, the Czech Philharmonic realised the music’s [Strauss’s *Ein Heldenleben*] colourful late-Romantic vision wonderfully whether at full or at hushed dynamic levels. The players gave their all, and the result was brilliant sounding and emotionally stirring. The concertmaster’s solo in this composition is as long and difficult as a violin concerto, and **Jiří Vodička** played it wonderfully... Throughout the piece, Semyon Bychkov displayed his total comprehension of the work. His conducting leads and inspires the orchestra. OperaPlus, 21 December 2017