



2021-22 Hal & Jeanette Segerstrom Family  
Foundation Classical Series

## BEETHOVEN & RACHMANINOFF

Preview talk with KUSC's Alan Chapman @ 7 p.m.

Thursday, Feb. 17, 2022 @ 8 p.m.

Friday, Feb. 18, 2022 @ 8 p.m.

Saturday, Feb. 19, 2022 @ 8 p.m.

Carl St. Clair, conductor  
Alessio Bax, piano

The 2021-22 season piano soloists  
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Performance at the Segerstrom Center for the Arts  
Renée and Henry Segerstrom Concert Hall

## PROGRAM

Beethoven

**Symphony No. 6 in F Major,  
Op. 68, Pastorale**

*Awakening of Cheerful Feelings  
on Arrival in the Country  
Scene by the Brook  
Merry Gathering of the  
Countryfolk  
Thunderstorm  
Shepherd's Song,  
Glad and Grateful Feelings  
After the Storm*

-Intermission-

Rachmaninoff

**Piano Concerto No. 3 in  
D Minor, Op. 30**

*Allegro ma non tanto  
Intermezzo  
Finale  
Alessio Bax*

## ABOUT THE ARTIST

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**Alessio Bax combines exceptional lyricism and insight with consummate technique. He is without a doubt “among the most remarkable young pianists now before the public” (Gramophone).** He catapulted to prominence with First Prize wins at both the Leeds

and Hamamatsu International Piano Competitions, and is now a familiar face on five continents, not only as a recitalist and chamber musician, but also as a concerto soloist who has appeared with more than 100 orchestras, including the London, Royal and St. Petersburg Philharmonic Orchestras, the Boston, Dallas, Sydney and City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestras and the NHK Symphony in Japan, collaborating with such eminent conductors as Marin Alsop, Vladimir Ashkenazy, Sir Andrew Davis, Sir Simon Rattle, Yuri Temirkanov and Jaap van Zweden.

Bax recently made a debut with the Milwaukee Symphony, where he performed Beethoven’s “Emperor” Concerto under Han-Na Chang, and the same composer’s Fourth Concerto and Choral Fantasy took him to the Santa Barbara Symphony. Placing special focus on long-term collaborative projects, Bax undertook Beethoven’s complete works for cello and piano at Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center (CMS).

Bax is a staple on the international summer festival circuit, and has performed at the Verbier Festival in Switzerland; the Aldeburgh Festival, Bath Festival, and Southbank Centre’s International Piano Series in England; the Risør Festival in Norway; the Salon-de-Provence Festival in France; the Moritzburg Festival, Ruhr Klavier-Festival, and Beethovenfest Bonn in Germany; and Le Pont International Music Festival in Japan. In the U.S., he makes regular appearances at Seattle Chamber Music Festival, Music@Menlo, the Bravo! Vail Music Festival, Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival, the Great Lakes Chamber Music Festival and

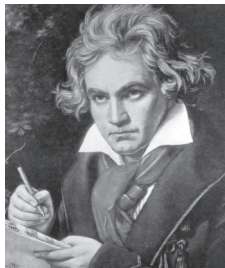
New York’s Bard Music Festival. As a chamber musician, Bax has collaborated with Emanuel Ax, Joshua Bell, Ian Bostridge, Lucille Chung, Sol Gabetta, Steven Isserlis, Daishin Kashimoto, Emmanuel Pahud, Lawrence Power, Paul Watkins, Jörg Widmann and the Emerson String Quartet, among many others.

Alessio Bax graduated with top honors at the record age of 14 from the conservatory of Bari, his hometown in Italy, where his teacher was Angela Montemurro. He studied in France with Francois-Joël Thiollier and attended the Chigiana Academy in Siena under Joaquín Achúcarro. In 1994 he moved to Dallas to continue his studies with Achúcarro at Southern Methodist University’s Meadows School of the Arts. In fall 2019, Bax joined the piano faculty of Boston’s New England Conservatory. A Steinway artist, he lives in New York City with Lucille Chung and their five-year-old daughter, Mila. 🌙

# PROGRAM NOTES

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## Ludwig Van Beethoven: **Symphony No. 6 in F major, Op. 68, *Pastorale***



**Many musicians and writers on music in the 18th century were preoccupied with music's expressive and representative powers.** Time and again, composers attempted to demonstrate that music was able, even without the help of words, to depict specific feelings and emotions, and even to narrate a

sequence of events. Examples abound, from Johann Kuhnau's Biblical Sonatas (1700) to Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* (1725) to Dittersdorf's symphonies based on Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (1785). One Justin Heinrich Knecht advertised his 1784 symphony, *Musical Portrait of Nature*, in a music journal on the very same page on which the notice for the 14-year-old Beethoven's first published works (three piano sonatas) appeared. Knecht's program, with its shepherds, streams, birds, thunderstorm, and clearing of the sky, is so similar to what Beethoven would have in his that it is almost certain Beethoven knew Knecht's work.

It seems that Beethoven was often inspired by extra-musical images in his compositions. Occasionally, he responded to literary works such as the tomb scene from *Romeo and Juliet* in the second movement of his String Quartet in F (Op. 18, No. 1), or *The Tempest* in the Piano Sonata in D minor (Op. 31, No. 2)—though it is not always clear how the connection has to be understood. With the Sixth Symphony, the evidence is much more concrete than in the other cases, since we have Beethoven's own titles for the individual movements. On the other hand, we also have his partial disclaimer about those titles, intended, as he insisted, "more [as] an expression of feeling than painting." On one of the sketch pages for the symphony, Beethoven noted: "All painting in instrumental music fails if it is pushed too far"; and indeed, for every bird call or thunderclap there are long stretches of highly evocative if not exactly descriptive music throughout the symphony.

Beethoven's attitude towards nature was different from other composers writing "characteristic" symphonies (which is how programmatic works were often called) in the early 19th century. Beethoven not only loved nature but, as many of his friends attested, worshipped it. Haydn and Mozart were not known for roaming the Austrian countryside; Beethoven, for his part, spent long and happy hours in the woods. He often retreated from Vienna to outlying areas such as Heiligenstadt, Döbling, or Gneixendorf, where he admired Nature with a capital N as a true spiritual child of Jean-Jacques Rousseau and the German *Sturm und Drang* ("storm and stress") movement. "His response to Nature was too deep and intense to be called anything less than mystical," English author Basil Lam commented, "though one would not have dared to use the expression in his presence."

Beethoven became fascinated with the composition of the *Pastorale* Symphony: as early as 1803, he notated in one of his sketchbooks a musical rendition of the sound of water in a stream. Even earlier, he made a musical reference to nature in the "Heiligenstadt Testament," the tragic document in which Beethoven first wrote about his encroaching deafness in 1802 (the Testament was addressed to Beethoven's two brothers but never sent). "What a humiliation for me when someone standing next to me heard a flute in the distance and I heard nothing, or someone heard a shepherd singing and again I heard nothing." It is difficult not to think of this mention of the shepherd when listening to the "Shepherd's Song" in the finale of the Sixth Symphony. The love for the sounds of nature became inseparable from the pain of not being able to hear them.

Nature, then, acquired a transcendent meaning for Beethoven. More than a place replete with forests, brooks, birds and shepherds, Nature is a stage where an entire human drama unfolds: it is Beethoven's personal drama that receives universal significance through the musical treatment. In this sense, the happiness, the storm, and the reconciliation of the elements must be understood on a symbolic level as well as in a literal sense. The Sixth Symphony, composed almost simultaneously with the Fifth, then, has more in common with that work than one might think. In its own way, the *Pastorale* also represents a triumph over Fate, but the same conflicts are played out in a different arena. One similarity between the two works is the linkage of the last movements. Just as the Fifth Symphony's gloomy C-minor Allegro is connected to the finale without a pause, the last three movements of the *Pastorale*, the country dance, the storm, and the thanksgiving song, form an uninterrupted sequence.

Of course, the differences between the two symphonies are no less important than the similarities. The most striking of these is, perhaps, the reduced role of musical contrast in the *Pastorale*—nowhere else does Beethoven spend so much time on one melody, a single harmonic turn or rhythmic figure. While the Fifth Symphony is characterized by an unrelenting impulse to move forward and a constant modification of its motifs, the Sixth favors identical repetitions and extensive pedals (long-held bass notes), in order to emphasize the basic matter, which is the peaceful contemplation of nature and people in it. 🌿

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*Peter Laki is visiting associate professor of music at Bard College in Annandale-on-Hudson, New York. He has been the program annotator for the Cleveland Orchestra and also for Pacific Symphony.*

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## Sergei Rachmaninoff: Piano Concerto No. 3



**“Rocky 3” asks much of a pianist: power, speed, the ability to spin out a deeply sculpted legato line—and sometimes all three at once. Not surprisingly, his third concerto is associated with some of the greatest pianists of the early 20th century.** Its dedicatee was the revered Josef Hoffmann, though

he never played it. Eleven years later it would help launch the career of an astounding newcomer named Vladimir Horowitz, who chose it for his graduation recital at the Kiev Conservatory and was soloist in the premiere recording.

Such distinguished lineage can make us forget that Rachmaninoff himself was a great pianist—perhaps one of the greatest ever. The composer felt that his third concerto was more “comfortable” to perform than his second, but now—more than a century later—the sheer virtuosity required in the third casts a longer shadow among pianists. Could Rachmaninoff really have found these demands so manageable? Medical detectives suspect that Rachmaninoff’s huge, flexible hands were a sign of Marfan syndrome, a genetic disorder that may well have blessed his piano technique while it crippled his cardiovascular health; the Concerto No. 3, composed in 1909 for his first major performances in America, was a spectacular showcase for his particular gifts. Touring with the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Rachmaninoff was both soloist and conductor in Chicago and Philadelphia; in New York he played the concerto with the New York Symphony Orchestra under the baton of Walter Damrosch, and with the New York Philharmonic under the direction of Gustav Mahler.

A quintessential late-Romantic composer, Rachmaninoff knew the value of opening a concerto with a ravishing melody. In this case, he develops the initial theme with unusual simplicity—a lyrical melody that transitions to a march—that hardly suggests the thunder and lightning to come. The second movement, marked *intermezzo*, is introspective in character, building gradually from quiet nostalgia to dramatic fortissimos that showcase the soloist’s power. In a work that is both a sprint and a marathon, this movement provides the few moments of respite for the soloist. Grace and speed are on order for the third movement, which builds toward a powerful climax by weaving together contrasting materials—accented march rhythms alternating with flowing, lyrical phrases. The movement reprises melodic materials from the concerto’s opening, concluding with a coda of thrilling power. 🎹

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*Michael Clive is a cultural reporter living in the Litchfield Hills of Connecticut. He is program annotator for Pacific Symphony and Louisiana Philharmonic, and editor-in-chief for The Santa Fe Opera.*

### Ludwig van Beethoven

**Born:** December 16, 1770. Bonn, Germany

**Died:** March 26, 1827. Vienna, Austria

**Symphony No. 6 in F Major, Op. 68, *Pastorale***

**Composed:** Early sketches for this symphony date from 1802, though its actual composition waited until the summers of 1807 and 1808, which Beethoven spent in the village of Heiligenstadt.

**World Premiere:** December 22, 1808, with the composer himself at the podium at the Theater an der Wien in Vienna.

**Most recent Pacific Symphony performance:** August 9, 2014 at Verizon Wireless Amphitheatre with Carl St.Clair conducting.

**Instrumentation:** three flutes including piccolo, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, two French horns, two trumpets, two trombones, timpani, and strings

**Estimated duration:** 39 minutes

### Sergei Rachmaninoff

**Born:** April 1, 1873. Oneg, near Semyonovo, Russia

**Died:** March 28, 1943. Beverly Hills, California

**Piano Concerto No. 3 in D Minor, Op. 30**

**Composed:** Summer of 1909.

**World Premiere:** November 28, 1909 in New York City with the composer as soloist, accompanied by the New York Symphony Society under Walter Damrosch.

**Most recent Pacific Symphony performance:** September 30, 2018 with Olga Kern as soloist and Carl St.Clair as conductor.

**Instrumentation:** two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, four French horns, two trumpets, three trombones, one tuba, timpani, percussion, strings, and solo piano

**Estimated duration:** 42 minutes