



BEETHOVEN'S SECOND PIANO CONCERTO

AEGIS CLASSICAL SERIES

FRIDAY & SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 23 & 24, AT 8 PM

NASHVILLE SYMPHONY

CHRISTOPHER SEAMAN, *conductor*
BENJAMIN GROSVENOR, *piano*

ANDRZEJ PANUFNIK

Sinfonia Sacra

- I. Three Visions
- II. Hymn

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

Concerto No. 2 in B-flat major for Piano and Orchestra, Op. 19

- I. Allegro con brio
- II. Adagio
- III. Rondo: Molto allegro

Benjamin Grosvenor, piano

- INTERMISSION -

RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS

Symphony No. 5 in D major

- I. Preludio: Moderato
- II. Scherzo: Presto misterioso
- III. Romanza: Lento
- IV. Passacaglia: Moderato

This concert will run approximately two hours.

CLASSICAL SERIES
PRESENTING PARTNER



BROUGHT TO YOU IN PART BY:



MEDIA PARTNER



*Lawrence S. Levine
Memorial Concert*

TONIGHT'S CONCERT

AT A GLANCE



ANDRZEJ PANUFNIK

Sinfonia Sacra

- Panufnik's third symphony, *Sinfonia Sacra*, was written in 1963 to celebrate a millennium of Christianity in Poland. Ironically, he had fled the Communist regime in his homeland nearly a decade earlier and was living in London. He would not visit Poland again until 1990, a year before his death.
- For the music, Panufnik incorporated Poland's oldest known hymn, the Bogurodzica ("Mother of God"). "I wanted this composition to be very much Polish in character and also to emphasize the Catholic tradition so deeply rooted in the country of my birth," he wrote.
- The structure of the symphony consists of two main parts, *Three Visions* and *Hymn*. Each of the visions in the first section is contrasting in instrumentation and based on intervals from the Bogurodzica. *Hymn* uses a melody invoking prayer to the Virgin Mary. "Although I intended this symphony to be emotionally very highly charged," the composer explained, "all of its component elements are contained within an extremely rigid design."



LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

Concerto No. 2 in B-flat major for Piano and Orchestra, Op. 19

- Beethoven's Second Piano Concerto was actually the first he wrote for the instrument. He decided to publish his ensuing Piano Concerto in C major first because it was a more dynamic piece. By contrast, this work — in particular the Adagio second movement — conveys a sense of profound introspection.
- The structure is based on the Classical model established by Mozart, and the origins of this piece can be traced to Beethoven's teenage years in Bonn during the late 1780s, though he likely completed it roughly a decade later. The music shows the composer experimenting with the Classical concerto form and points the way toward his later innovations.

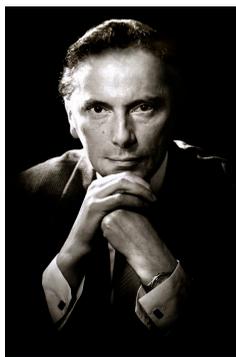


RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS

Symphony No. 5 in D major

- Written in the early years of World War II, Vaughan Williams' Fifth Symphony has a pastoral feel largely in keeping with the composer's reputation at the time. Though initially under the sway of Wagner when he was a young composer, he found his own voice by embracing the musical heritage of his native England — in particular the country's folk and religious traditions. Those influences can be heard in this work.
- Much of the music draws from another project Vaughan Williams worked on over the course of four decades — an opera based on *The Pilgrim's Progress*, the allegory of Christian belief published by John Bunyan in the late 17th century.
- With his aesthetically conservative style, Vaughan Williams felt a kinship with Finnish composer Jean Sibelius, who also weathered charges of being out of step with the modernist revolution. He dedicated his Fifth Symphony "without permission and with the sincerest flattery to Jean Sibelius, whose great example is worthy of all imitation."

— Corinne Fombelle & Thomas May



ANDRZEJ PANUFNIK

Born on September 24, 1914, in Warsaw; died in London on October 27, 1991

Sinfonia Sacra

Composed: 1963

First performance: August 12, 1964, with Louis Fremaux

First Nashville Symphony performance:

These concerts mark the first performances by the Nashville Symphony

Estimated length: 22 minutes

The year in which Andrzej Panufnik composed *Sinfonia Sacra*, 1963, was a pivotal one personally and artistically. Nearly a decade had passed since he had defected from his native Poland, using a concert engagement in Switzerland in 1954 as the pretext for his escape — which included an unnerving chase by the Polish Secret Police through the streets of Zurich.

Panufnik made international headlines as a defector, but he had to reestablish himself in the West, which meant devoting more time to his career as a conductor. He settled in England, where he had briefly studied in his youth and was given support by Ralph Vaughan Williams, in particular. In 1963, Panufnik married a second time and settled with his wife in a new home on the bank of the Thames in London. *Sinfonia Sacra* won an important composition prize that year as well, marking a new beginning for his life as a composer.

There had been many setbacks. Panufnik's education was interrupted by Hitler's invasion of Poland, where he had returned after study abroad just in time for the outbreak of World War II. During the occupation, when public gatherings to make music were prohibited, he formed a duo with another of Poland's most eminent postwar composers, Witold Lutoslawski, to play in cafes and also contributed songs to the Resistance. Everything he had written to date was destroyed when his manuscripts were cast into a fire by a squatter in his apartment after Panufnik fled

Warsaw near the end of the war.

Under the Communist regime, Panufnik faced increasing pressure to write Party-approved music; whatever deviated from officially approved criteria — which was ambiguous and arbitrarily enforced — got censored. After his defection, Poland banned all of Panufnik's music outright until 1977, and the composer didn't revisit his native land until 1990. His adopted country, meanwhile, conferred a knighthood on him not long before his death in 1991.

All the more ironic, then, that *Sinfonia Sacra* — which expressed deeply religious and patriotic feelings connected to Poland — was written in exile. The outward occasion was to pay homage to Poland's Millennium of Christianity and Statehood. The third of Panufnik's 10 symphonies, it has become one of his most frequently played compositions.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

“I wanted this composition to be very much Polish in character and also to emphasize the Catholic tradition so deeply rooted in the country of my birth,” Panufnik wrote. He crafted a work that fuses emotional immediacy with rigid design. *Sinfonia Sacra* is in two parts, the first a series of three “Visions,” and the second a longer movement titled “Hymn.” The music is based on the Gregorian chant known as the Bogurodzica, the oldest known Polish hymn, whose title means “Mother of God.” It was not only sung as a religious hymn to the Virgin Mary, but served as a kind of national anthem for state occasions and even on the battlefield to stir up the soldiers. Panufnik remarked that he wanted to incorporate these two aspects, “heroic and religious,” in *Sinfonia Sacra*, “stressing their emotional power. The listener might still feel the atmosphere of the battlefield and of prayer, these two persistently repeated elements having dominated Polish life throughout all the thousand years of its tragic history.”

Each of the three “Visions,” the first a fanfare for four trumpets, builds its material from the intervals between the Bogurodzica's first four notes, respectively (with an additional tritone in the third “Vision” for contrast). The “Hymn” movement, according to the composer, “has the character of a simple prayer to the Virgin, which would express adoration and warmth.” The music

develops into an increasingly “ardent invocation until at last the full melody of the Bogurodzica finally breaks through, for the first time heard in its full melodic line, at which point the trumpets repeat their summons from the first Vision, bringing *Sinfonia Sacra* to a climactic end.”

Sinfonia Sacra is scored for 3 flutes (3rd doubling piccolo), 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 6 horns, 4 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, 3 percussionists and strings



LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

Born on December 16, 1770, in Bonn, Germany; died on March 26, 1827, in Vienna

Concerto No. 2 in B-flat Major for Piano and Orchestra, Op. 19

Composed:: Late 1780s-1798

First performance: Beethoven introduced different versions of the evolving work on several occasions during the 1790s, most likely in 1795 in Vienna and again in 1798 in Prague.

First Nashville Symphony performance:

October 25 & 26, 1976, at War Memorial Auditorium with soloist Emanuel Ax and interim music advisor John Nelson

Estimated length: 28 minutes

Chronologically speaking, the “Second” Piano Concerto is actually the first of the five concertos Beethoven completed for the instrument. Its composition, including multiple revisions, is thought to have spanned from the late 1780s, when the composer still lived in Bonn, to 1798. Beethoven withheld publication until 1801 and in 1809 added an extensive new cadenza for the first movement. While less ambitious than the official “First” Piano Concerto, the Second expresses aspects of Beethoven’s keyboard poetry that were essential to the way he defined himself in the formative years of his career.

Beethoven’s first three piano concertos show the stamp of Mozart, who had revolutionized the genre in the decade before Beethoven moved to Vienna in 1792, with works that young Beethoven himself performed to great acclaim. The origins of the work officially known as the Piano Concerto No. 2 can be traced to his teenage years in Bonn. Using material that was composed no later than 1790 for the first movement, Beethoven treated this concerto as a work-in-progress throughout his first Viennese decade and revised the score — especially the Adagio and Rondo — when new opportunities arose for performance. At one point, for example, Beethoven jettisoned an earlier version of the Rondo entirely and wrote a substitute movement.

Beethoven decided to publish his later Concerto in C major (the “First”) before this one because the former’s more obvious pianistic brilliance made it especially suitable to represent his inaugural publication in the genre. Even though the Second Concerto is relatively more conservative in its approach than the First Concerto or First Symphony, we still encounter Beethoven reimagining the Classical model he had inherited.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Beethoven embarks on a spacious opening movement with a theme in keeping with familiar Classical language. But he soon veers into unexpected harmonic directions that underscore his drive to think of the conventional language in new ways. Deftly and with great diplomacy, the piano takes charge after the orchestral exposition and begins to probe still other possibilities within the thematic material; it also encourages the ensemble to revel in a delectable new theme. The relatively minimal orchestration — no clarinets, trumpets or drums — enhances the chamber-like textures of this intimate dialogue.

The second, more lyrical part of the opening thematic idea gets special attention in the development. Instead of a concerto of grandstanding heroic poses, the attitude here is one of comic panache, with perhaps even a subversive wink at genre conventions — as when the soloist wryly allows the orchestra back into the spotlight after the cadenza for a brief final bow.

An aria-like meditation whose simplicity encompasses lovingly elaborated details, the

Adagio gives voice to a dreamier muse. If Beethoven tends to conjure images of a keyboard-smashing firebrand, the Adagio reminds us that he was especially admired for the profound introspection he could sustain across a slow, drawn-out improvisation. A sense of the spells he was said to weave in private recitals is touchingly evoked in the simple and eloquent recitative near the very end of this movement.

The first two movements show Beethoven experimenting with Mozart's concerto archetype. The teasingly tricky rhythmic shape of the

rondo finale theme, in contrast, is closer in spirit to Haydn's vigorously earthy humor. The first episode — later repeated — has a similar character, while the shadow introduced by the central episode's shift to the minor proves fleeting and is quickly chased away by the sparkling animation that prevails. Soloist and orchestra conspire for a witty finish to the comedy.

In addition to solo piano, Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 2 calls for flute, 2 oboes, 2 bassoons, 2 horns and strings.



RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS

Born on October 12, 1872, in the village of Down Ampney in Gloucestershire in southwest England; died on August 26, 1958, in London

Composed: 1938-43; revised 1951

First performance: June 24, 1943, in London, with the composer conducting the London Philharmonic Orchestra

First Nashville Symphony performance:

February 18 & 19, 1963 at War Memorial Auditorium with visiting conductor Harry Newstone

Estimated length: 42 minutes

Symphony No. 5 in D major

In contrast to Panufnik's ostracism by the Communist government of his native Poland, Ralph Vaughan Williams held a place of conspicuous honor in British culture when he composed his Fifth Symphony. It was even believed by some that he was making a valedictory statement with this work. For his part, Vaughan Williams disliked the prospect of being lionized as a "grand old man." Yet by the first years of World War II, he was being cast as a spokesperson for contemporary English music more prominently than ever. Vaughan Williams had inherited the public mantle as the U.K.'s leading composer following the deaths of Edward Elgar (whom he didn't especially admire) and Gustav Holst (whom he did) in the 1930s.

Vaughan Williams — and that is his correct surname; his first name is pronounced "Rafe" — had become canonized as a central figure of the modern English renaissance in music. Born in the rolling countryside west of London and raised in Surrey in comfortable circumstances, he was related on his mother's side to the Wedgwood family (famed for its pottery firm) and to Charles Darwin. His father was a vicar, though the composer himself was never a professing Christian, settling into what his second wife Ursula described as "a cheerful agnosticism."

Vaughan Williams had to wait until his late 30s to earn widespread recognition as a composer. Like so many artists from that era, he fell briefly under Wagner's spell, but early in the 20th century he embarked on a fresh direction, determined, as he put it, to "cast off the fetters of Teutonism." Vaughan Williams found an inspiring source for his own voice in the beauty of the English Renaissance in the Tudor era. He also began exploring the legacy of English folksong, incorporating these influences into various projects.

His breakthrough success came with *Fantasia on a Theme of Thomas Tallis*, whose 1910 premiere was followed less than a month later by the premiere of his Walt Whitman-inspired choral work, *A Sea Symphony*. It was the first of an eventual catalogue of nine symphonies, which Vaughan Williams started numbering only after giving titles to his first three. He had been typecast as a champion of "pastoral" music — of a conservative style (in relation to the modernism around him) steeped in England's folk and religious traditions, somewhat nostalgic and deeply contemplative in spirit. The Third Symphony (featuring a wordless soprano) had even been titled "Pastoral."

But Vaughan Williams' Fourth

(premiered in 1935) shocked listeners and critics with its aggressive dissonance. The Fifth, regarded by some as his symphonic masterpiece, returns to the pastoral idiom, but from a new perspective and with full mastery of his skills as a symphonist. That, too, is an irony in that the work was completed during wartime. It is also seen as part of a larger symphonic grouping that includes the Fourth and the Sixth — in other words, not a contradiction of, but a complement to, its predecessor.

Vaughan Williams felt a kinship with his slightly older peer Jean Sibelius — another composer who had weathered charges of being out of step with the modernist revolution, and who doggedly pursued his conviction that the symphonic genre still held meaning for the 20th century. He touchingly dedicated the Fifth “without permission and with the sincerest flattery to Jean Sibelius, whose great example is worthy of all imitation,” later simplifying the dedication in the published score. The great Finn heard a performance in 1946.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

In three of its four movements, the Fifth Symphony draws on another project that was especially dear to the composer: his opera based on *The Pilgrim's Progress*, the allegory of Christian belief published by John Bunyan in 1678. Gestating for decades, the opera, which Vaughan Williams called a “morality,” resisted being completed. After some 40 years of intermittent work, he was prompted to finish it for a production organized in 1951.

The sense of a distant time is evoked at once by the sound of the two horns playing a simple call in D major against an underlying C in the bass. This isn't “modernist” tension, but instead evokes an archaic sonority associated with the old modes of Church music — before the familiar Western system of major and minor modes, with their sense of purpose and direction, became established. The first movement, moreover, is titled “Preludio,” further suggesting a gesture of stage-setting, even though Vaughan Williams resorts to some basic features of sonata form. The gently undulating calm of this music gives way to a violin phrase, which quotes the setting of the hymn “For All the Saints” that he had contributed to the *English Hymnal*. After these ideas are further explored, the eruption of climactically affirmative music turns out to be just another station along the journey, and Vaughan Williams returns to the subdued horn calls for a quiet close.

A very brief Scherzo, exquisitely orchestrated, is a study in rhythmic subtlety as well. It is followed by some of the composer's loftiest, most transportive music. Titled “Romanza,” the slow movement bears an especially close relation to *The Pilgrim's Progress*, beginning with the English horn's plaintive melody, which in the “morality” is used to set the words the Pilgrim sings when

he comes upon a cross set above a sepulcher: “He hath given me rest by his sorrow, and life by his death.” Other components of this “Romanza” include an idea for strings that blossoms into a sequence of delicate woodwind solos and a contrasting, faster section related to the Pilgrim's exclamation: “Save me, Lord, my burden is greater than I can bear.” Solos for violin and horn round out this sublime movement.

Against the archaic soundscape of the Fifth's beginning, in the closing movement Vaughan Williams juxtaposes a forthright celebration of D major opening low in the strings and, with a countermelody above, evoking hints of the “Ode to Joy” melody from another great D-major symphony, the Ninth of Beethoven (another composer not especially admired by Vaughan Williams). The opening theme is presented as a passacaglia bass, which is repeated over and over as variations are layered over it. But Vaughan Williams uses that old Baroque technique quite liberally, eventually leading us back to a recapitulation of the opening horn calls, which sound inevitably transformed after our musical pilgrimage. The final pages, as the strings loft into the ether, seem an image of the peace the world still longed for when the Fifth Symphony was premiered in 1943.

The Symphony No. 5 is scored for 2 flutes (2nd doubling piccolo), 1 oboe, English horn, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, timpani and strings.

— Thomas May, the Nashville Symphony's program annotator, is a writer and translator who covers classical and contemporary music. He blogs at memeteria.com.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS



CHRISTOPHER SEAMAN
CONDUCTOR

British conductor Christopher Seaman has an international reputation for inspirational music-making. His diverse musical interests are reflected in his range of repertoire, and he is particularly known for his interpretations of early 20th century English music, as well as Bruckner, Brahms and Sibelius.

As part of a long and distinguished career in the U.S., Seaman was music director of the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra until 2011 and was subsequently named conductor laureate. During his 13-year tenure — the longest in the orchestra’s history — he raised the ensemble’s artistic level, broadened its audience base and created a new concert series. This contribution was recognized with an award from the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers.

Other key positions have included music director of the Naples Philharmonic Orchestra, conductor-in-residence with the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, artistic advisor of the San Antonio Symphony and, in the U.K., principal conductor of both the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra and the Northern Sinfonia.

As a guest conductor, he has regularly performed with the Aspen Music Festival, Detroit, Houston, St. Louis, Cincinnati and Seattle orchestras, the Warsaw Philharmonic Orchestra, Kristiansand Symphony Orchestra, Orchestra of Opera North and Orquestra Filarmônica de Minas Gerais in Brazil. He frequently visits Australia

and Asia, where he has conducted the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra and the Taiwan, Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and Singapore orchestras. The 2017/18 season includes return engagements with Rochester Philharmonic, as well as dates with Des Moines Symphony, Melbourne Symphony and Tampere Philharmonic Orchestra.

Acknowledging his outstanding leadership as conductor, recording artist, teacher and community arts partner, the University of Rochester awarded Seaman an Honorary Doctor of Music in 2009. In 2013, he published his first book, *Inside Conducting*, illustrating his wealth of experience as a conductor and a teacher. The book was chosen by both *The Financial Times* and *Classical Music* magazine as one of their books of 2013, while *The Spectator* wrote that it “demystifies the art and the figure of the conductor.”

Seaman makes a point of encouraging young talent and was the course director of the Symphony Services International Conductor Development Programme in Australia for many years, devoting a number of weeks each year to teaching and directing training programs for young conductors. He has led masterclasses with the Tonhalle-Orchester Zürich and has also worked with the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain and the Guildhall School of Music and Drama.

As a recording artist, he has worked with the Royal Philharmonic and the Philharmonia orchestras, among others, and his recordings with the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra have received great critical acclaim, with *The Sunday Telegraph* describing their 2012 harmonia mundi recording of Vaughan Williams’ *A London Symphony* as a “fine recording of an English classic...as impressive as I have ever heard.”

Vaughan Williams felt a kinship with his slightly older peer Jean Sibelius — another composer who had weathered charges of being out of step with the modernist revolution, and who doggedly pursued his conviction that the symphonic genre still held meaning for the 20th century.



**BENJAMIN
GROSVENOR**
PIANO

British pianist Benjamin Grosvenor is internationally recognized for his electrifying performances and insightful interpretations.

His virtuosic command over the most strenuous technical complexities underpins the remarkable depth and understanding of his musicianship. He is renowned for his distinctive sound, described as “poetic and gently ironic, brilliant yet clear-minded, intelligent but not without humor, all translated through a beautifully clear and singing touch” (according to *The Independent*), making him one of the most sought-after young pianists in the world.

Grosvenor first came to prominence as the winner of the Keyboard Final of the 2004 BBC Young Musician Competition at age 11. Since

then, he has become an internationally regarded pianist performing with orchestras across the world, including the Boston Symphony, The Cleveland Orchestra, Filarmonica della Scala, Gürzenich Orchestra Cologne and the London Symphony Orchestra. A BBC New Generation Artist from 2010-12, he has performed at the BBC Proms on a number of occasions and in 2015 starred at the Last Night, performing Shostakovich’s Piano Concerto No. 2 with the BBC Symphony Orchestra and Marin Alsop.

In 2011, Grosvenor signed to Decca Classics, becoming the youngest British musician ever to sign to the label and the first British pianist to sign to the label in almost 60 years. During his sensational career to date, he has received Gramophone’s Young Artist of the Year and Instrumental Award, a Classic Brits Critics’ Award, U.K. Critics’ Circle Award for Exceptional Young Talent, a Diapason d’Or Jeune Talent Award and a Fellowship from the Royal Academy of Music. In 2016, he was announced as the inaugural recipient of the Ronnie and Lawrence Ackman Classical Piano Prize with the New York Philharmonic.