BEETHOVEN’S PASTORAL SYMPHONY

THURSDAY, MARCH 19, AT 7 PM | FRIDAY & SATURDAY, MARCH 20 & 21, AT 8 PM

NASHVILLE SYMPHONY & CHORUS
GIANCARLO GUERRERO, conductor
TUCKER BIDDLECOMBE, chorus director
JESSICA RIVERA, soprano
ANDREW GARLAND, baritone

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN
Symphony No. 6 in F major, Op. 68,
“Pastoral” – 39 minutes
Allegro ma non troppo: Awakening of cheerful feelings on arriving in the country
Andante molto mosso: Scene by the brook
Allegro: Merry assembly of country folk
Allegro: Thunderstorm
Allegretto: Shepherd’s Song – Happy, grateful feelings after the storm

- INTERMISSION -

GABRIELA LENA FRANK
Conquest Requiem – LIVE RECORDING
38 minutes
Introit: Cuicatl de Malinche (Song of Malinche)
Judex ergo cum sedebit
Dies Irae: Cuicatl de Martín (Song of Martín)
Recordare, Jesu pie
Rex Tremendae: El aullido de Malinche (the Howl of Malinche)
Confutatis maledictis
In Paradisum: Benedicion de Malinche y Martín

Jessica Rivera, soprano
Andrew Garland, baritone

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This concert will last approximately one hour and 45 minutes, including a 20-minute intermission.

This concert will be recorded live for future release and future broadcast. Please keep noise to a minimum to ensure the highest-quality recording.
What remarkably different worlds Beethoven’s Fifth and Sixth Symphonies inhabit! The Fifth is the epitome of concision, while the Sixth lays out a leisurely sense of spaces to be strolled through and explored. The Fifth is an abstract canvas, its argument entirely musical: how to get from a determined C minor opening to a victory in C major? But onto that canvas, listeners have inscribed scenarios and imagined narratives since the music was first heard — the power of Fate in ancient Greek tragedy, the victory of the French Revolution, countless others.

The Sixth, on the other hand, carries a title provided by the composer himself: Pastoral, referring to Beethoven's deep love of nature and long, ruminative walks in the countryside. In this work, Beethoven anticipates the musical Romanticism of the later 19th century, with its leaning for programmatic composition — pieces that allude to stories or sources outside of the music itself.

Yet both the Fifth and the Sixth Symphonies were unveiled on the very same concert! On December 22, 1808, Vienna’s Theater an der Wien hosted a very lengthy program that Beethoven himself organized and presented, as was standard practice for a freelance artist at the time — hence it was an all-Beethoven concert showcasing his latest works. Along with the Fifth and the Sixth, it featured the Fourth Piano Concerto, excerpts from the Mass in C major, a concert aria, and the Choral Fantasy, which anticipates the “Ode to Joy” finale of the Ninth. Whether the audience, freezing in an unheated hall, realized that music history was being made is another story.

Dramatic though their differences are,
the Fifth and Sixth are of the same vintage. Beethoven worked on both at the same time. The closer you listen, the more you begin to notice certain aspects they share: the very first notes of the *Pastoral* are (almost) the same rhythmic pattern we know from the “Fate” motto opening the Fifth — except the *Pastoral*’s idea continues meandering amiably before reaching its sustained note and pause (whereas the Fifth does so at once, on the fourth note). Or consider the bird’s-eye view of overall design: in the Pastoral, Beethoven links the Scherzo directly to the Storm movement and then, without pause, leaps right into the cheerful finale. It’s a variant of his radical approach in the Fifth, where he directly links the Scherzo with a dark, suspenseful bridge to the triumphant finale.

In other words, are these two symphonies really “opposites,” as the old Beethoven cliché used to have it? According to the cliché, the odd-numbered symphonies are bold and aggressive, the even-numbered ones more “relaxed” and even “conventional.” In fact, the two works are more like close siblings who turn out to have strikingly different personalities.

Beethoven restlessly moved from one lodging to another within Vienna, but he always felt at home in the countryside. The Sixth can be heard as his expression of thanks for the therapeutic joy he found in nature. He even added evocative titles to each of its movements — all of them involving scenes of nature and the countryside: “Awakening of Cheerful Feelings upon Arriving at the Countryside” (first movement); “Scene by the Brook” (second movement); “Merry Gathering of Country Folk” (filling the usual position of a Beethoven Scherzo in the third movement); “Thunderstorm” (brief interlude); and “Shepherd’s Song: Happy and Thankful Feelings After the Storm” (finale).

These should not be taken too literally, though. Beethoven himself seemed to warn against this by writing onto the title page that the music is “more an expression of feeling than painting.”

**WHAT TO LISTEN FOR**

The first movement is about awakenings — gentle ones, though. The distinction is particularly apparent if you compare it to the dramatic call to awaken that opens the Fifth Symphony. As in that work, Beethoven insists on rhythmic patterns with fixed determination. Here, the summons is to a new level of sensitivity and awareness, as if this metaphorical trip to the country actually means escaping the mundane experience of time. The first movement revels in repeated sequences that slowly shift in harmony: Beethoven almost anticipates the giddy euphoria of Minimalism’s recurring loops.

The lengthy slow movement takes this principle of relaxation even further. It’s a daring thing to do, coming right after an opening movement that made a point of removing dramatic tension. Yet Beethoven’s exquisite orchestration (a quality not often associated with this composer) adds color to the flowing waves of melody. A series of woodwind cadenzas near the end imitates various birdcalls and is among the more explicitly extra-musical references in the *Pastoral*.

This programmatic aspect comes to the fore in the next two movements — though, again, note that Beethoven intends no specific narrative. The third movement’s “merry gathering” adds earthiness to the innocence, imprinting a vividly physical sense with its vigorous rhythms — what a contrast to the ethereal flow of the preceding movement! The dancing and the raw humor of the peasants in the Trio bring an abrupt change of meter. Clouds overshadow the good times with ominous pianissimo until the thunderstorm arrives in full fury. Beethoven’s biting harmonies and volume contrasts are enhanced by orchestral effects of timpani and piercing piccolo. This is the *Pastoral*’s tensest moment.

In the Fifth, terrible struggle leads the way to blazing victory. The Pastoral’s finale is a gentler thanksgiving. Woodwinds intone a
hymn-like phrase leading to the wheeling main theme, which is introduced by clarinet, then passed on to the horn, elaborated by the strings and, finally, given to the full ensemble. Even though the spirit of relaxation here is reminiscent of the first two movements, Beethoven’s achievement is to make us feel as though we’ve arrived at a new place. The coda touches on a note of nostalgia before bringing this idyll to a close.

The Symphony No. 6 is scored for piccolo, 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, 2 trombones, timpani and strings.

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GABRIELA LENA FRANK

Conquest Requiem

Born on September 26, 1972, in Berkeley, California

She currently resides in Boonville, California

Composed: 2016-17

Estimated length: 38 minutes

First performance: May 5, 2017, with Andrés Orozco-Estrada conducting the Houston Symphony and Chorus

First Nashville Symphony performance: These are the orchestra’s first performances and will be recorded live for a forthcoming release on Naxos.

**“Only in the United States could you hear a story like mine, the daughter of an immigrant, born in the hippie campus town of Berkeley, with hearing loss,” says Gabriela Lena Frank. “Yet I am a mix of American cultural facets that were laid in place centuries ago.” The child of a Peruvian mother of Chinese descent and a father with a Lithuanian-Jewish background, this remarkable composer fearlessly navigates multicultural identities in her creative work. The Conquest Requiem is a particularly bold example that dramatizes the violent, blood-stained, still unresolved and still unfolding moment of confrontation between the Old and New Worlds.

When the widely traveled Frank made her first trip to her mother’s homeland of Peru in 2000, it became a “mind-blowing, life-changing experience,” she recalls, and inspired Three Latin American Dances (2003), her second orchestral work, which marked an early breakthrough.

The insatiably curious composer, who is also a distinguished pianist and mentor, has been highly sought after through commissions and orchestral residencies (including one at Vanderbilt’s Blair School of Music last year) and received a Latin GRAMMY® Award in 2009 for Inca Dances, recorded by guitarist Manuel Barrueco and Cuarteto Latinoamericano.

Many of Frank’s works involve some kind of story in the form of a narrative or character. She created the Conquest Requiem, among her most ambitious scores to date, during her tenure as composer-in-residence with the Houston Symphony under music director Andrés Orozco-Estrada. Here, the composer juxtaposes the traditional Roman Catholic Mass for the dead with decisive historical events and characters from the Spanish conquest of the Aztec Empire during the early 16th century.

But rather than focus on the standard narrative...**
as told by the victors — the Conquistadores — Frank and her longtime collaborator, the Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright and poet Nilo Cruz, craft a story from the perspective of the conquered.

The Conquest Requiem homes in on the figure of Malinche, a young Nahua woman who was enslaved by the invading Spaniards and eventually became the mistress of Hernán Cortés. Malinche (sung here by soprano Jessica Rivera) reflects on the Conquest not as an heroic epic, but as a devastating tragedy. The complexity of her own feelings, including remorse, mirrors the contradictory facets of her reputation.

The other chief character is Martín, Malinche’s son by Cortés (sung here by baritone Andrew Garland), whose existence as a mestizo points to the new era that has come into being. The chorus is omnipresent, tasked with the commentator role familiar from ancient Greek tragedy and singing in every one of the Conquest Requiem’s seven movements.

The libretto combines three languages: the Latin used in the Requiem liturgy; Nahuatl, the classical language of the Aztecs; and new verses in Spanish by Nilo Cruz, with whom Frank is collaborating on a much anticipated new opera about Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera that will be premiered at San Diego Opera in 2021. Frank explains that she became more involved in preparing the text than is her usual custom, dramaturgically consulting with Cruz about the storyline and character development. The resulting psychological portrayal of Malinche and her pain reflects Frank’s ongoing fascination with questions of identity.

Who is being mourned and commemorated in the Conquest Requiem? Frank explains that she became aware of how so many modern-day conflicts can be traced back to this pivotal meeting of the Old and New Worlds, when the one began to colonize the other. “We’ve inherited all this baggage and been grandfathered into a United States today originating from that violence, and it affects everyday issues. Even the issue of climate change, when you realize that in this time period [of the Conquest] there was a huge depletion of resources being taken out, paving the way for pollution and destruction of the environment. This period laid some of the groundwork for all of that.” The Conquest Requiem thus poses the fundamental question: “How do you reconcile this legacy?”

Frank recalls the profound impact of singing in a chorus during her student years. “I never forgot the massive universes these composers were painting in their Requiems.” Benjamin Britten’s War Requiem in particular became the inspiration for the Conquest Requiem’s combination of old and modern texts.

Frank decisively compresses and shortens the traditional Latin liturgy while expanding individual sections with the text in Nahuatl and Spanish. She begins with the expected Introitus praying for “eternal rest” (the source of the term “Requiem”), but the solo soprano soon introduces Malinche’s voice, singing a mixture of Cruz’s poetry and verses that Frank culled from an anthology of Nahuatl poetry by Aztec princes and kings. At the end of the first movement, the chorus sings the Kyrie, to which Malinche adds lloro (“I cry”).

A vast portion of the work is then given to Frank’s unconventional treatment of the Dies irae, the series of prayers involving the Last Judgment, which stretches across movements two through six. Omitting the Offertory, Sanctus and Agnus Dei sections of the Requiem Mass, Frank instead sets In Paradisum in the seventh and final movement. Technically, this is not part of the Requiem Mass, but a prayer sung as the choir accompanies the body from the church to the place of burial. (The Requiems of Britten and Fauré are two famous examples that also include this prayer.)

Musically, Frank strove to imagine unusual colors, blends and gestures. “I thought of how the New World was unfathomable to the people coming over. They had never seen
Frank has provided the following commentary on her Conquest Requiem:

“Much has been written of the violent meeting of the Old and New Worlds that produced the Americas — North, Central and South — known to the world today. Over the centuries since, key figures have emerged — conquistadores Cristoforo Colombo, Hernán Cortés and Francisco Pizarro; chroniclers Bernal Díaz del Castillo, the native Garcilaso de la Vega and the Dominican friar Bartolomé de las Casas — as especially emblematic of the cataclysm that was the Conquest. These men and countless others bore witness and, oftentimes, great responsibility for the death and destruction of entire societies while simultaneously having a hand in the birth of new mestizo (mixed-race) civilizations.

“Against such grand historical strokes, the stories of ordinary people are easily swept away but for the efforts of creative imagination, employed here in the Conquest Requiem. This piece is inspired by the true story of Malinche, a Nahua woman from the Gulf Coast of Mexico who was given to the Spaniards as a young slave. Malinche’s ever-evolving prowess as an interpreter of her native Nahuatl, various Mayan dialects and Spanish elevated her position such that she would convert to Christianity and become mistress to Cortés during his war against the Aztecs. She would later give birth to their son Martín, one of the first mestizos of the New World.

“While Malinche has been conflated with Aztec legends, she has been variously viewed as feminist hero who saved countless lives, treacherous villain who facilitated genocide, conflicted victim of forces beyond her control, or as symbolic mother of the new mestizo people.

“In the Conquest Requiem, Malinche’s story is the linchpin for the juxtaposition of traditional liturgical verses from the Latin Mass for the dead against Nahua poetry as chronicled from the mouths of fallen indigenous princes. Newly composed Spanish words from playwright/poet Nilo Cruz round out the text.”

In addition to solo soprano, solo baritone and mixed chorus, the Conquest Requiem is scored for 3 flutes (3rd doubling piccolo), 3 oboes (3rd doubling English horn), 3 clarinets (3rd doubling bass clarinet), 3 bassoons, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, 2 trombones, tuba, timpani, 3 percussionists, piano, harp and strings.

— Thomas May is the Nashville Symphony’s program annotator.
ABOUT THE SOLOISTS

JESSICA RIVERA
soprano

Possessing a voice praised by the San Francisco Chronicle for its “effortless precision and tonal luster,” GRAMMY®-winning soprano Jessica Rivera is one of the most inspired vocal artists performing today. The intelligence, dimension and spirituality with which she infuses her performances has garnered Rivera artistic collaborations with composers including John Adams, Osvaldo Golijov, Gabriela Lena Frank, Jonathan Leshnoff, Nico Muhly and Paola Prestini, and has brought her together with such conductors as Gustavo Dudamel, Sir Simon Rattle, Esa-Pekka Salonen and Michael Tilson Thomas.

During the 2019/20 season, Rivera returns to the Aspen Music Festival for an evening of Spanish art songs with guitarist Sharon Isbin. She also performs Golijov’s La Pasión según San Marcos in her debut with the Minnesota Orchestra, led by Maria Guinand.

A major voice in the rich culture of Latin American music and composers, she recently performed in Antonio Lysy’s Te Amo Argentina with Arizona Friends of Chamber Music and partnered with pianist Mark Carver for a recital titled Homage to Victoria de los Angeles.

Rivera treasures her decade-long collaboration with Robert Spano and the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, and was recently featured in Brahms’ Ein deutsches Requiem and Jonathan Leshnoff’s Zohar with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra and Chorus at Carnegie Hall. Her third release for Urtext, Homage to Victoria de los Angeles, is due for release in 2020.

ANDREW GARLAND
baritone

Hailed for his “baritone of strength and vocal opulence” and “cosmic energy and suavity” (Opera News), Andrew Garland is widely recognized as a leader in recital work. His performances include Carnegie Hall with pianist Warren Jones and programs of modern American songs all over the United States and in Canada. This season Garland can be heard as the baritone soloist in Messiah with the Colorado Symphony and the Colorado Bach Ensemble, in Santa Fe Pro Musica’s production of The Creation, and in recital with Warren Jones for Coastal Concerts.

He is a regular with the New York Festival of Song (NYFOS) and has given multiple recitals at Carnegie Hall and the Ravinia Festival, as well as Vocal Arts DC, Marilyn Horne Foundation, the Bard Festival, Camerata Pacifica, Andre-Turp Society in Montréal, Voce at Pace, Fort Worth Opera and Seattle Opera. In 2014, he was the featured recitalist for the NATS national convention, where that organization’s president declared him “the next Thomas Hampson.”

Garland’s latest solo recording, American Portraits with pianist Donna Loewy, went to No. 1 on Amazon Classical. He has five other recordings on the Telarc, Naxos, Roven Records and Azica Labels. He is the winner of the Lavinia Jensen, NATSAA, Washington International, American Traditions, NATS and Opera Columbus competitions, and he was a prize winner in the Montréal International, Jose Iturbi, Gerda Lissner, McCammon and Palm Beach International competitions.

Garland recently joined the voice faculty at the University of Colorado-Boulder.
NASHVILLE SYMPHONY CHORUS
TUCKER BIDDLECOMBE, Chorus Director

SOPRANO
Beverly Anderson†
Katie Arata
Esther Bae
Amie Bates
Jill Boehme
Stephanie Breiwa
Christine Brosend
Daphne Bugelli
Sara Jean Curtiss
Claire Delcourt
Katie Doyle
Kacie Dunham
Allison Espada
Becky Evans-Young
Amy Frogge
Kelli Gauthier
Rebecca Greer
Grace J. Guill†
Ally Hard
Stacey Haslam
Vanessa D. Jackson*
Katie Lawrence
Jennifer Lynn
Alisha Austin Menard
Jean Miller
Jessie Nelson
Angela Pasquini Clifford
Samantha Petry
Kristine Phillips
Beth Pirtle Ring
Renita J.
Smith-Crittendon
Ashlinn Snyder
Paige Stinnett
Clair Susong
Marva A. Swann
Marjorie Taggart
Angie Thomas*
Ashley Vance
Jan Staats Volk†
Camille Winton
Sylvia Wynn
Callie Zindel

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Kathy Bearden
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Vinéecia Buchanan
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Carla M. Davis†
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Erin Elgass
Cara Frank
Dana Purser Gary
Katherine Gillett
Elizabeth Gilliam†
Debra L. Greenspan
Bevin Gregory
Judith Griffin
Leah Handelsman
Sidney Hyde
Liza Marie Johnston
Valerie Kamen
Leah Koesten
Stephanie Kraft
Emily Longenecker
Shelly McCormack
Asha Moody
Jessica Moore
Stephanie Moritz
Shelia Mullican
Valerie Nelson
Lisa Pellegrin
Annette Phillips
Stacy L. Reed
Debbie Reyland
Anna Lea Ritchie
Allie Senyard
Hannah Sims
Anjali Sivaankaran
Madalynne Skelton
Caroline Kimbrey Talbert*
Deanna Talbert
Kathryn Whitaker
Maggie Zeilman

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Robert Bennett
Eric Boehme
Kevin Brenner
Brett Cartwright
Taylor Chadwick
Joe A. Fitzpatrick
Fred Garcia
Danny Gordon*•
Kory Henkel
William F. Hodge*
Ron Jensen
Jeremiah Kamtman
Mitchell Lane
Scott Lee
Lynn McGill
Don Mott
Devin Mueller
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