

TORONTO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Gustavo Gimeno, Music Director

*Beethoven's Sixth +
Korngold's Violin*

Alpesh Chauhan, conductor
Ray Chen, violin

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky
Fatum, Op.77

Erich Wolfgang Korngold
Violin Concerto in D Major, Op. 35

I. Moderato nobile

II. Romance: Andante

III. Finale: Allegro assai vivace

Intermission

Ludwig van Beethoven
Symphony No. 6 in F Major, Op. 68
"Pastoral"

I. Awakening of cheerful feelings on arriving
in the country: Allegro ma non troppo

II. Scene by the brook: Andante molto mosso

III. Merry assembly of country folk: Allegro

IV. Thunderstorm: Allegro

V. Shepherd's Song – Happy, grateful feelings after
the storm: Allegretto

Program 3

Friday,
January 26, 2024

7:30pm

Saturday,
January 27, 2024

8:00pm

The TSO Chamber Soloists

Friday, January 26, 2024
6:15pm

Luri Lee, violin

Yolanda Bruno, violin

Rémi Pelletier, viola

Winona Zelenka, cello

Samuel Barber

String Quartet in B Minor, Op. 11

*The January 26
performance is generously
supported by the Estate of
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Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840–1893)

Fatum, Op.77

Composed 1868

14 min

IN COMMON WITH MANY of the great 19th-century symphonists, Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky found the symphonic poem to be an enticing medium. For inspiration, Tchaikovsky would turn to large-scale concepts and artistic masterworks. *Romeo and Juliet* (1869–70), *The Tempest* (1873), and *Hamlet* (1889) each presented visceral, compact visions of Shakespeare's dramas, while *Slavic March* (1876) harnessed surging nationalism in the context of the Serbian-Ottoman Wars.

Fatum (*Fate*) was the first of Tchaikovsky's symphonic poems to be performed. The underlying concept of the work is as powerful as it is enigmatic. Tchaikovsky was deeply preoccupied with fate as an idea, and it resurfaces throughout his compositions and letters. In a letter about his later Symphony No. 4, Tchaikovsky described Fate as, "that inevitable force which checks our aspirations towards happiness ere they reach the goal, which watches jealously lest our peace and bliss should be complete and cloudless—a force which, like the sword of Damocles, hangs perpetually over our heads and is always embittering the soul. This force is inescapable and invincible. There is no other course but to submit and inwardly lament."

Tchaikovsky refused to elaborate on the underlying story of this earlier *Fate*, leaving

the door open to listener interpretation. The work's first performance in Moscow saw concert producers pair it with an unrelated epigraph, possibly without Tchaikovsky's consent, in an attempt to contextualise it for the audience. Tchaikovsky called this concert a significant success, writing to his brother Anatoly that, "this seems to be the best thing I've written so far—at least, that's what others say." Tchaikovsky's opinion of the work later soured, perhaps due to unfavourable reviews of its second performance and his cancelled plans to marry Belgian soprano Désirée Artôt, whose brief but magnetic presence

had coincided with *Fate*'s composition. Tchaikovsky destroyed the manuscript sometime in the 1870s, and the work was only reconstructed and performed again after his death.

Fate provides a glimpse of the composer's younger style, perhaps less formally refined but no less evocative and engaging than his later works. The work employs an unusual structure, consisting of three repeated themes. The first theme is weighty and portentous, befitting

of the work's grand title. A restless bridging passage carries into an extended and unexpectedly sunny second theme in a lyrical style. The third theme is characterised by an ominous insistence and echoes of the *trepak* folk dance. The work ends with a dramatic return to the initial theme: in which the door of Fate seems to slam shut.

—Program note by Don Anderson



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Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky—by Dane Thibeault

Erich Wolfgang Korngold (1897–1957)

Violin Concerto in D Major, Op. 35

Composed 1945

26 min

KORNGOLD COMPOSED HIS FIRST WORKS when he was 8 and saw his ballet *The Snowman* produced professionally five years later. His loyalty to 19th-century tradition won him many performing champions, including such renowned artists as conductor Bruno Walter, pianist Artur Schnabel, and violinist Fritz Kreisler.

He also played a role in reviving the operettas of Johann Strauss, Jr., an activity that brought him together with the celebrated impresario Max Reinhardt. When Reinhardt travelled to Hollywood in 1934 to produce a film adaptation of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, he brought Korngold along to adapt Mendelssohn's incidental stage score for use in the film. Impressed by Korngold's work, the Warner Brothers studio asked him to compose original film scores. He wrote 18 in all, winning Academy Awards for *Anthony Adverse* (1936) and *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (1938).

For several years, he shuttled back and forth between Europe and America, creating operas and concert scores for the old world and outstanding symphonic film music for

the new. With the onset of the Second World War, he and his family settled in California. After the war, he returned to writing concert music in his previous style. Attitudes had changed so much in the interim that his works were condemned as old-fashioned. As the wheel of taste revolves, however, Korngold's brand of lush, emotional music has regained much of its early popularity.

After the soloist to whom Korngold offered the première of the Violin Concerto

decided not to perform it, Korngold persuaded the renowned virtuoso Jascha Heifetz to give the première (although he insisted that Korngold increase the finale's technical difficulty!). The first performance took place on February 15, 1947, with Vladimir Golschmann conducting the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra.

Korngold borrowed the themes from his film scores: *Another Dawn* and *Juarez* (first movement); *Anthony Adverse* (second

movement); and *The Prince and the Pauper* (third movement). It is above all a lyrical creation, intended, in the composer's words, "for a Caruso rather than a Paganini." After two tender and expressive movements, the joyful "Finale", as Heifetz requested, bristles with virtuoso fireworks.

—Program note by Don Anderson



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Erich Wolfgang Korngold—by Dane Thibeault

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1849)

Symphony No. 6 in F Major, Op. 68 “Pastoral”

Composed 1803–1808

40 min

FIRST SKETCHED IN 1803, the “Pastoral” Symphony was completed in 1808 and had its public première, along with the Fifth Symphony and other works, in a memorable concert in Vienna, under the composer’s direction, on December 22, 1808. Like the Seventh and Eighth Symphonies, the Fifth and Sixth form a contrasting pair, and to summarize them is to compile a lexicon of antonyms. The Fifth is concise, tense, rugged, dynamic, and argumentative; the Sixth is spacious, relaxed, euphonious, placid, and lyrical. Of the two works, however, the outwardly genial Sixth, with its five-movement plan and evocative titles, may in fact be the more radical.

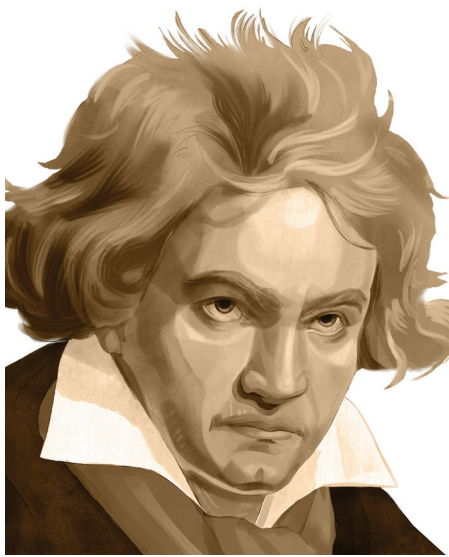
The “Pastoral” Symphony expressed Beethoven’s deep, lifelong love of nature; he considered country life essential to his mental and physical health, spent most summers in the Austrian countryside, and did some of his most important creative work while trekking through woods and fields, sketchbook in hand. Moreover, as program music in a pastoral vein, the symphony had precedents

in late-18th-century German music: the *pastorella* and other genres of vocal and instrumental church music, Haydn’s popular oratorios *The Creation* and *The Seasons*, and “characteristic” concert symphonies on such things as the months of the year, the times of the day, Classical mythology, national characteristics, emotional states, battles, hunts, journeys, weddings, the weather—and country life. The “Pastoral” Symphony, in turn, would influence many Romantic works of a programmatic or “characteristic” nature, from

Berlioz’s *Symphonie fantastique* (with its “Scene in the Meadows”) and Schumann’s “Spring” Symphony, to later symphonic poems and even operas.

Program music was still controversial in 1808, however, which is surely why Beethoven, in a handbill for the première, described the “Pastoral” Symphony as “more the expression of feeling than painting”—that is, more allusive than descriptive. Still, the work conjures

up increasingly particular associations as it progresses. The first movement evokes the pastoral mood in only a general way, but the “Scene by the Brook” already features some quite specific imagery (running water, birds), and the last three movements, all played without a break, form a little dramatic scenario in which “merry” country people



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Ludwig van Beethoven—by Dane Thibeault

play music and dance, endure a storm, and give thanks in song when the weather clears.

Beethoven's debts to the conventions of pastoral music are obvious from the opening bars; the very key of F major—a traditional "horn key"—had already long been associated with the countryside and the hunt. The first notes of the symphony are a quiet, sustained open fifth in the violas and cellos—and such drone effects (there are many in this symphony) have always conjured up rustic instruments like bagpipes or the hurdy-gurdy. The first movement (like that of the Fifth Symphony) is single-minded, with motifs from the opening theme reappearing again and again throughout, yet here the cumulative effect is leisurely, not tight-knit (the motifs are not so much developed as *repeated*). The "Scene by the brook" is a no less leisurely unfolding of richly embellished melody, on the broadest time scale. Persistent triplets and undulating string figures in the accompaniment evoke the murmuring of flowing water, and the cadenza-like eruption of birdsong near the end—nightingale (flute), quail (oboe), cuckoo (clarinet)—marks one of Beethoven's rare essays in tone-painting.

The first two movements are both mostly quiet throughout, with simple and slowly shifting harmonies. Both are worked out in an unusually relaxed and expansive kind of sonata form, with little of the tension and drama we associate with development sections and recapitulations and codas. The "scherzo" opens with a charming parody of Austrian folk dancing, and then depicts the efforts of a hapless village band, with an oboist who cannot find the downbeats and a bassoonist who can play only two notes; a more raucous peasant dance, in duple time, serves as a contrasting trio.

The storm movement, in F minor (the first

hint of a minor key in the piece), opens with distant thunder (cellos and basses) and droplets of rain (staccato violins and violas), and closes with an unforgettable image of thunder, lightning, and rain receding as sunlight (hymn-like woodwinds and strings) breaks through the storm clouds. In between, Beethoven unleashes a musical torrent of unprecedented power—a veritable deluge. He puts quintuplet figures in the cellos against quadruplets in the basses, to create an indistinct rumbling in the lowest register, and uses timpani strokes and slashing violin motifs to conjure up thunder and lightning.

A "piping" motif with alpine overtones (clarinet, then horn, over drones in the violas and cellos) evolves into a gentle "Shepherds' Song": at once the closing rondo re-establishes the pastoral mood of the first movement, albeit in a more rustic and dance-like vein. Just 30 bars from the end, the "Pastoral" Symphony achieves an appropriate apotheosis—not in a blaze of triumph (like the Fifth) but in quiet prayer, as the strings alone, *sotto voce*, briefly transform the "piping" motif into a tender hymn.

—Program note by Kevin Bazzana

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*How delighted I shall be to
ramble for a while through
bushes, woods, under trees,
over grass and rocks.*

*No one can love the country
as much as I do.*

—LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

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Alpesh Chauhan, conductor

These performances mark Alpesh Chauhan's TSO début.

British conductor Alpesh Chauhan is Principal Guest Conductor of the Düsseldorfer Symphoniker and Music Director of Birmingham Opera Company. His début album features orchestral works by Tchaikovsky including *Francesca da Rimini*, *The Voyevoda*, and *The Tempest*, and was released with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra on Chandos Records in June 2023.

Recent and forthcoming highlights include performances with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the Seattle and Houston Symphonies, Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, Oslo Philharmonic, the Hallé, the Atlanta, National, Melbourne, and Antwerp Symphony Orchestras, Symphony Orchestra of India, the London Symphony and Philharmonic Orchestras, Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, Orchestra Sinfonica Nazionale della RAI, the BBC Symphony and Philharmonic Orchestras, Orchestre National de Lille, and Malmö Symphony Orchestra, alongside many symphonic projects with BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra and Düsseldorfer Symphoniker.

Chauhan enjoys collaborations with distinguished soloists such as Nicola Benedetti, Karen Cargill, Colin Currie, Veronika Eberle, James Ehnes, Pablo Ferrández, Alban Gerhardt, Ilya Gringolts, Benjamin Grosvenor, Hilary Hahn, Sir Stephen Hough, Leila Josefowicz, Pavel Kolesnikov, Johannes Moser, Beatrice Rana, and Arcadi Volodos.

Following his outstanding début in 2015, he was appointed Principal Conductor of the Filarmonica Arturo Toscanini in Parma and performed and recorded much of the great symphonic repertoire, including a complete cycle of Brahms's symphonies. Alongside the recently critically acclaimed *RhineGold*, other notable opera titles include Shostakovich's *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*, *West Side Story*, and a production of *Turandot* at the Palau de les Arts Reina Sofia in Valencia.

A keen advocate of music education for young people, Chauhan is a patron of Awards for Young Musicians, a UK charity supporting talented young people from disadvantaged backgrounds on their musical journeys. He has also worked with ensembles such as the National Youth Orchestra of Scotland and the symphony orchestras of the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland and the Royal Northern College of Music. He was the conductor of the 2015 BBC film *Ten Pieces*, which brought the world of classical music into secondary schools across the UK and received a distinguished BAFTA Award.

Born in Birmingham, Chauhan studied cello with Eduardo Vassallo at the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester before continuing at the RNCM to pursue the prestigious master's degree in conducting. Chauhan studied with Stanislaw Skrowaczewski and was mentored by Andris Nelsons and Edward Gardner in his post as Assistant Conductor of the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra from 2014 to 2016. Chauhan was named Newcomer of the Year in the 2021 International Opera Awards and, in 2022, he was delighted to receive the Conductor Award (*Miglior Direttore*) from the Italian National Association of Music Critics for concerts across Italy in 2021. Chauhan was honoured to receive an OBE in HRH The Queen's New Year Honours in January 2022 for Services to the Arts.



Ray Chen, violin

Ray Chen made his TSO début in September 2013.

Violinist and online personality Ray Chen redefines what it means to be a classical musician in the 21st century. With a global reach that enhances and inspires a new classical audience, Chen's remarkable musicianship transmits to millions around the world, reflected through his engagements both online and with the foremost orchestras and concert halls globally. Beyond the performing arts, his work has also contributed to philanthropy, popular culture, and educational technology.

Initially coming to attention via the Yehudi Menuhin (2008) and Queen Elisabeth (2009) Competitions, of which he was First Prize winner, he has built a profile in Europe, Asia, and the USA as well as his native Australia both live and on disc. Signed in 2017 to Decca Classics, the summer of 2017 saw the recording of the first album of this partnership with the London Philharmonic as a succession to his previous three critically acclaimed albums on Sony, the first of which (*Virtuoso*) received an ECHO Klassik Award. Profiled as "one to watch" by *The Strad* and *Gramophone* magazines, his profile has grown to encompass his featuring in the *Forbes* list of 30 most influential Asians under 30, appearing in major online TV series *Mozart in the Jungle*, a multi-year partnership with Giorgio Armani (who designed the cover of his Mozart album with Christoph Eschenbach) and performing at major media events such as France's Bastille Day (live to 800,000 people), the Nobel Prize Concert in Stockholm (telecast across Europe), and the BBC Proms.

More recently, Chen co-founded Tonic, an independent start-up that aims to motivate musicians and learners around the world to practise their craft together. Although new, the innovative app has cultivated a highly engaged and supportive community and is available to download on iOS and Android. Chen's presence on social media makes him a pioneer in an artist's interaction with their audience, utilizing the new opportunities of modern technology. His appearances and interactions with music and musicians are instantly disseminated to a new public in a contemporary and relatable way. He is an ambassador for Sony Electronics, a music consultant for Riot Games—the leading esports company best known for *League of Legends*—and has been featured in *Vogue* magazine. He released his own design of a violin case for the industry manufacturer GEWA and proudly plays Thomastik-Infeld strings. His commitment to music education is paramount, and inspires the younger generation of music students with his series of self-produced videos combining comedy, education, and music. Through his online promotions, his appearances regularly sell out and draw an entirely new demographic to the concert hall.

Born in Taiwan and raised in Australia, Chen was accepted to the Curtis Institute of Music at age 15, where he studied with Aaron Rosand and was supported by Young Concert Artists. He plays the 1714 "Dolphin" Stradivarius violin on loan from the Nippon Music Foundation. This instrument was once owned by the famed violinist Jascha Heifetz.