

ISAACSTERN@100 INTERNATIONAL KICKOFF EVENT

# BEETHOVEN for the GENERATIONS

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December 16, 2019 at 7:30 p.m.

HELZBERG HALL, KAUFFMAN CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS

MICHAEL STERN, *conductor*

EMANUEL AX, *piano*

PAMELA FRANK, *violin*

YO-YO MA, *cello*

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## BEETHOVEN

### Piano Trio in E-flat Major, op. 70 No. 2

I. Poco sostenuto — Allegro ma non troppo

II. Allegretto

III. Allegretto ma non troppo

IV. Finale: Allegro

EMANUEL AX, *piano*

PAMELA FRANK, *violin*

YO-YO MA, *cello*

### Overture to *Egmont*, op. 84

### Concerto in C Major for Piano, Violin, Cello and Orchestra, op. 56, “Triple Concerto”

I. Allegro

II. Largo

III. Rondo alla polacca

EMANUEL AX, *piano*

PAMELA FRANK, *violin*

YO-YO MA, *cello*

*THIS EVENING'S CONCERT WILL BE PERFORMED WITHOUT INTERMISSION.*

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*This concert is made possible by the generous support of Annette Bloch.*

*Concert proceeds will launch the Kansas City Symphony's all-new Annette Bloch NextGen Venture Fund to engage future generations of music lovers and concertgoers.*

**LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)**

How best to describe Ludwig van Beethoven? Revolutionary, difficult, genius, cantankerous, virtuoso, hot-tempered, giant, temperamental, superstar, volatile, brilliant, irritable, visionary ... most certainly a fascinating and very complicated man.

Born in Bonn, Germany, in 1770, probably on December 16, Ludwig was named after his Kapellmeister (court music director) grandfather. Ludwig's father, Johann van Beethoven, was a court musician who hoped to garner fame and fortune by touring young Ludwig as a Mozartean child prodigy. Although talented as a young pianist, Ludwig's rough instruction by his father and difficult family circumstances precluded the realization of Johann's dreams for his son.

The Beethoven household was not serene. Johann was an alcoholic and the chaos of his disease took a toll on the growing family. Of the seven children born to Johann and Maria Magdalena Keverich, only the second-born Ludwig and two younger brothers, Kaspar Anton Karl and Nikolaus Johann, survived infancy. Malnutrition and chronic illness were increasingly common companions to the harsh treatment Ludwig received at the hands of his father.

Ludwig's early keyboard, violin and viola studies led to instruction by court organist Christian Gottlob Neefe. This spurred an interest in composition, resulting in Beethoven's first published work, a set of keyboard variations. He became an unpaid assistant organist to Neefe at age 11 and began receiving a wage at age 13. Neefe wrote, "If he continues in the same manner he started, he is sure to become a second Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart."

Bonn's Elector Maximilian Francis encouraged and subsidized Beethoven's ambitions by underwriting travel to Vienna where the young composer hoped to study with Mozart, though there is scant and likely apocryphal evidence the two musicians ever met. Beethoven's sojourn was cut short in May 1787 when news of his mother's illness reached him and he quickly returned to Bonn. Her death in July 1787 caused his father's drinking to further spiral out of control, and the teenage Ludwig was forced to assume duties as head of the household.



The ensuing five years in Bonn were a time of tremendous growth and developing maturity for Beethoven. He composed a substantial number of works (unpublished and listed without opus numbers) that reflected his advancing abilities and range. His keyboard skills rapidly evolved, establishing the foundation for his formidable improvisational capability. It is likely that he met Franz Joseph Haydn in 1790 as Haydn stopped in Bonn on his way to London. Mozart's death in 1791 sealed the end of Beethoven's youthful ambition to study with his erstwhile role model. When Haydn returned to Vienna in 1792, it seems certain that arrangements were made then for Beethoven to study with the eminent composer.

The Elector again granted Beethoven leave to go to Vienna and provided him with a scholarship. Beethoven left Bonn in

November 1792, never to return. The youth immersed himself in studies with Haydn, violin instruction with Ignaz Schuppanzigh, and even occasional lessons in vocal composition with Antonio Salieri. At this heady time, Beethoven was making his reputation as a piano virtuoso, playing in the salons of the nobility and building renown for his ability to improvise.

Beethoven continued composing during these early years in Vienna but waited until 1795 to issue his opus 1, a set of three piano trios. They were a commercial and artistic success, encouraging the headstrong young musician to follow his muse. A steady stream of music followed: cello sonatas, violin sonatas, piano sonatas, trios, piano concerti, his first symphony and more.

Amid these triumphs rose the specter of incipient deafness. In the famous Heiligenstadt Testament, a letter Beethoven wrote to his brothers in 1802 but never sent (it was discovered among his papers at his death in 1827), he detailed the anguish of his affliction and how he resolved to continue living solely because of music. The ironic tragedy of a composer going deaf is not unique (William Boyce, Bedřich Smetana, Gabriel Fauré and Ralph Vaughan Williams all suffered profound hearing loss), but Beethoven's calamity has held a special place in the public imagination for two centuries. His conversation books, where visitors wrote their side of the conversation to which Beethoven replied aloud, are distinctive evidence of the reluctant accommodation necessary in his situation.

As the years went by, Beethoven's deafness and thorny personality caused ever-growing isolation. His overall compositional output dwindled, but he labored over massive works, including the *Missa solemnis*, *Diabelli Variations*, "Hammerklavier" Sonata, and most notably

his Ninth Symphony, which premiered to wild approval in Vienna on May 7, 1824.

Violinist Joseph Böhm noted:

Beethoven himself conducted, that is, he stood in front of a conductor's stand and threw himself back and forth like a madman. At one moment he stretched to his full height, at the next he crouched down to the floor, he flailed about with his hands and feet as though he wanted to play all the instruments and sing all the chorus parts.

Fortunately, the musicians had been cautioned beforehand to follow the beat provided by Michael Umlauf, the concertmaster. When the audience applauded, Beethoven couldn't hear the ovation and stood with his back to the crowd. Famously, the alto soloist Caroline Unger turned Beethoven to the audience so he could see the massive acclaim for his music.

Beethoven's already poor health declined as he composed his famous late string quartets. An open coach ride in December 1826 brought on a case of pneumonia that eventually led to his death on March 26, 1827.

By some accounts, 20,000 mourners were in attendance at Beethoven's funeral. Austrian poet and dramatist Franz Grillparzer wrote the funeral oration, which recounts Beethoven's heroic status:

He was an artist indeed, and who can stand out beside him? As the Behemoth storms through the seas, he sped through the boundaries of his art ... he traversed everything, grasped everything. Whoever comes after him will not follow in his footsteps, he must begin anew, for this innovator has finished his life's work at the limits of art. ■

## PROGRAM NOTES BY ERIC WILLIAMS

### PIANO TRIO IN E-FLAT MAJOR, OP. 70 NO. 2 (1808) 30 MINUTES

Piano, violin and cello.

Ludwig van Beethoven did not invent the piano trio; the development of that form was led by Franz Joseph Haydn and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. Haydn composed 45 piano trios, including 14 written during the 1790s when Beethoven would have been most influenced by the master. How could he not have absorbed the lessons of Haydn's playfulness with key, tempo, meter and the like? Beethoven's opus 1 was a set of three piano trios published in 1795, but aside from a 1797 trio scored for piano, clarinet or violin and cello, he did not return to the form until 1808.

Despite creative successes, the early 1800s were a period of uncertainty in Beethoven's life. The 1805 premiere of his opera *Fidelio* was a fiasco and its 1806 revisions also drew criticism. His plans for a concert for his own benefit in 1807 were quashed and he was open to the possibility of leaving Vienna. The offer of a post in Kassel was enticing and he made plans to depart. Countess Anna Maria von Erdödy, a skillful pianist celebrated for her musical patronage, intervened and helped persuade Archduke Rudolph, Prince Lobkowitz and Prince Kinsky to provide Beethoven with an annuity to retain his presence in Vienna.

Writing with complete assurance and mastery, Beethoven composed the two marvelous trios of opus 70 and dedicated them to the Countess in gratitude for her advocacy. The first, better known as the "Ghost," utilized some sketches Beethoven made for the witches' scene in a projected

opera based on Shakespeare's "Macbeth." Although the opera was never realized, the resultant trio is splendid, tending to overshadow its companion work.

Built in four movements, the op. 70 No. 2 trio opens with gossamer sounds in an extended prelude that merely suggests melody. Once established, the movement rolls along, filled with charm and vigor.

It is often said that Beethoven never wrote a slow movement for his symphonies, and the same applies to this trio. The gracious second movement alternates deliciously between major and minor tonalities with several stylish variations on the melodic material.

Beethoven's ingenuity is frequently displayed in scherzo movements, abundantly so in this trio. Alternating between the gracious opening theme punctuated by a slightly off-kilter descending scale in the piano and a hushed chorale parsed first by strings followed by piano, this intriguing movement is wonderfully refreshing.

The trio concludes vibrantly, with many opportunities for each instrument to shine within the essential ensemble context. It is as if Beethoven transcribed a lively conversation among friends. Stormy late string quartets may be ahead, but this trio is sunny Beethoven. ■

## OVERTURE TO *EGMONT*, OP. 84 (1810) 9 MINUTES

Piccolo, 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, timpani and strings.

The great literary figure Johann Wolfgang von Goethe exerted a tremendous influence on the artistic milieu of his era. Beethoven held him in high esteem and was much taken with his 1788 play “Egmont,” which relates the story of Dutch nobleman Count Egmont and his principled stand against the forces of Spanish despotism. Sentenced to die by the brutal Duke of Alva, Count Egmont accepts his fate while envisioning eventual triumph for the forces of liberty.

In 1809, Vienna’s Burgtheater planned a revival of the play and asked Beethoven to compose incidental music for the production. Perhaps he felt a special kinship to the dramatized history given his Flemish heritage. Maybe he was motivated by the siege and occupation of Vienna by Napoleon’s troops. Nonetheless, he eagerly undertook the commission as the play’s subject matter aligned with his sociopolitical views. Of the 10 pieces Beethoven composed for the production, the Overture is now a staple of the orchestral repertoire while the other nine have faded into obscurity.

Beethoven made arrangements to send Goethe a copy of the incidental music to “Egmont,” writing the author in 1811:

You will soon receive the music to Egmont from Leipzig through Breitkopf and Härtel, this glorious Egmont which I read so ardently, thought over and experienced again and gave out in music — I would greatly like to have your judgment on it and your blame, too ... will be

beneficial to me and my art, and be accepted as gladly as the highest praise.

Your Excellency’s Great admirer  
*Ludwig van Beethoven*

Goethe commented of Beethoven’s music, “He entered into my intentions with an admirable stroke of genius,” and hoped they would meet. The two finally met in July 1812 at Teplitz, the Bohemian spa resort. Surely Beethoven’s deafness complicated communication but they spent much time together over several days. In various correspondence, each assessed the other with mixed admiration and censure. The urbane and celebrated Goethe commented, “His talent astounded me; nevertheless, he unfortunately has an utterly untamed personality, not completely wrong in thinking the world detestable, but hardly making it more pleasant for himself or others by his attitude.” In turn, Beethoven observed, “Goethe delights in the court atmosphere far more than is becoming to a poet. Is there any point in talking about absurdities of virtuosos, when poets, who should be regarded as the nation’s first teachers, forget everything for the sake of this glitter?”

Characterized by urgency and resolve, Beethoven’s music vividly depicts the drama of Egmont’s story with stentorian chords, plaintive cries and roiling melody. The heroic and stirring conclusion is among Beethoven’s most brilliant writing, now casting a long shadow over Goethe’s once-famous play. ■

**CONCERTO IN C MAJOR FOR PIANO, VIOLIN, CELLO AND ORCHESTRA, OP. 56,  
“TRIPLE CONCERTO” (1804) 34 MINUTES**

Solo piano, violin and cello, flute, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, timpani and strings.

Beethoven’s Concerto in C Major for Piano, Violin, Cello and Orchestra, commonly known as the “Triple Concerto,” is something of a rarity. Various concerti for three instruments by J.S. Bach, Vivaldi and Telemann had been around for the better part of a century when Beethoven took up the genre. While earlier composers had written generally for three of the same instrument, Beethoven explored uncharted territory by using a piano trio (piano, violin and cello) as the soloists in his composition. Beethoven sketched his first attempt in 1802 and abandoned that effort. He began the Triple Concerto in early 1804 and finished it in May or June of that year, but it did not receive its public premiere until 1808.

As Beethoven noted in an August 26, 1804, letter to his publisher, the Triple Concerto “is really something new.” The concerto presented a logistical challenge: how to handle three instruments of very different volume and showcase each in a solo capacity as well as a featured ensemble. Beethoven solved the volume challenge by frequently giving the initial statements of melodic material to the cello, thus allowing it to be heard unimpeded by the thicker texture of a trio. He also exploited the full range of combinations available with a trio and orchestra. While each solo instrument has its bravura turn, Beethoven deftly groups the soloists and crafts a work filled with richly satisfying duet and trio moments.

The concerto, presented in a traditional arrangement of three movements, opens softly in the bass register. The orchestra unfolds the thematic material, marked with warmth and grace. By the time the solo cello enters, the appealing melody is well-situated in our ears. A thorough development of the thematic material ensues. The solo parts make virtuosic demands, even without traditional cadenzas as vehicles for showmanship.

The brief and intensely lyrical second movement is nothing short of sublime. The solo cello again takes the lead, spinning a beautiful melody from one exquisite moment to another. The enchantment builds as the piano and violin add their lustrous tones. All too soon, the orchestra nudges the trio from their reverie. A series of insistent repeated notes create a bridge to the finale, a lively rondo alla polacca — a rondo in the manner of a polonaise, the French term for a dance of Polish origin.

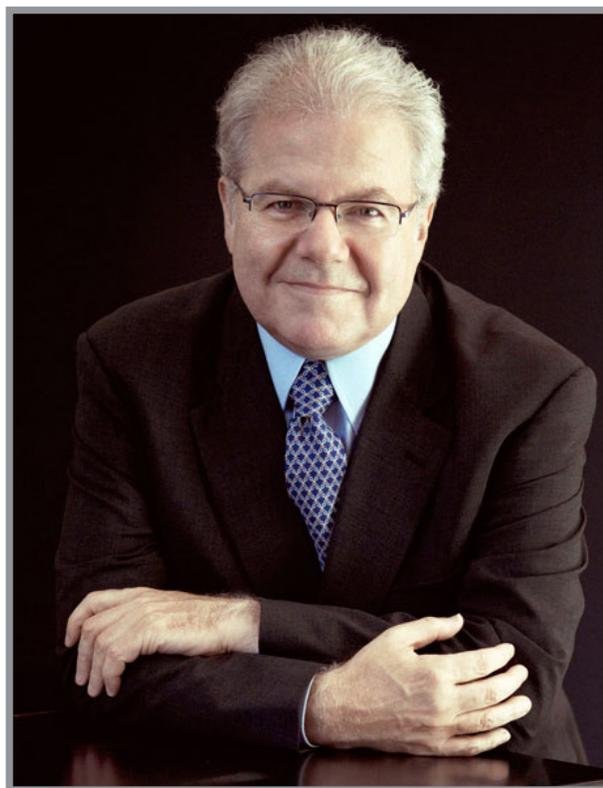
The rondo offers a celebratory conclusion to this impressive concerto. Swept along on themes richly conducive to Beethoven’s imaginative variations, the alternating sections are wonderfully complementary. Joyous melodies and engaging dance rhythms combine for an irrepressibly jubilant ending to a work that “is really something new.” ■

## ABOUT EMANUEL AX, *piano*

Born in modern-day Lvov, Poland, Emanuel Ax moved to Winnipeg, Canada with his family when he was a young boy. Ax made his New York debut in the Young Concert Artists Series and in 1974 won the first Arthur Rubinstein International Piano Master Competition in Tel Aviv. In 1975, he won the Michaels Award from Young Concert Artists, followed four years later by the Avery Fisher Prize.

Highlights of the 2019/20 season include a European summer festivals tour with the Vienna Philharmonic and long-time collaborative partner Bernard Haitink, an Asian tour with the London Symphony and Sir Simon Rattle, and U.S. concerts with the Rotterdam Philharmonic and Lahav Shani, plus three concerts with regular partners Leonidas Kavakos and Yo-Yo Ma at Carnegie Hall. Further participation in Carnegie Hall's celebration of Beethoven's 250th birthday will culminate in a solo recital in May preceded by recitals in Madison, Santa Barbara, Orange County, Washington, Las Vegas and Colorado Springs. With orchestra, he can be heard in Houston, Baltimore, Atlanta, San Diego, San Francisco, Los Angeles, New York, Montreal, Kansas City, Philadelphia, Cincinnati and Indianapolis. Internationally, he can be heard with orchestras in London, Frankfurt, Berlin, Rome, Zurich, Rotterdam and Tel Aviv.

Ax has been a Sony Classical exclusive recording artist since 1987. He has received Grammy® Awards for the second and third volumes of his cycle of Haydn's piano sonatas. He also has made a series



of Grammy Award-winning recordings with cellist Yo-Yo Ma of the Beethoven and Brahms sonatas for cello and piano. In the 2004/05 season, Ax contributed to an International Emmy® Award-winning BBC documentary commemorating the Holocaust that aired on the 60th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz. In 2013, Ax's recording "Variations" received the Echo Klassik Award for Solo Recording of the Year (19th Century Music/Piano).

Ax is a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and holds honorary doctorates of music from Skidmore College, Yale University and Columbia University. For more information about Ax, please visit [emanuelax.com](http://emanuelax.com). ■

## ABOUT PAMELA FRANK, *violin*

Pamela Frank has established an outstanding international reputation across an unusually varied range of performing activity. As a soloist, she has performed with leading orchestras including the New York Philharmonic, Chicago Symphony, San Francisco Symphony, Academy of St. Martin in the Fields, Berlin Philharmonic and St. Petersburg Philharmonic. She has performed regularly with the Zurich Tonhalle Orchestra, recording the complete Mozart violin concertos with them under David Zinman. She also has recorded a Schubert album and the Beethoven sonata cycle, both with her father Claude Frank. She is a sought-after chamber musician and has performed at many international festivals including Aldeburgh, Verbier, Edinburgh, Salzburg, Tanglewood, Marlboro and Ravinia.

Aside from her devotion to works of the standard repertory, Frank has performed and recorded a number of contemporary works. Her accomplishments were recognized in 1999 with the prestigious Avery Fisher Prize. She is professor of violin at the Curtis Institute of Music, and she also teaches and coaches annually at the Tanglewood, Ravinia and Verbier festivals. Since 2008, she has been the artistic director of the Evnin Rising Stars, a mentoring program for young artists at Caramoor Center for the Arts. Her newest venture is the formation of Fit as a Fiddle Inc., a collaboration with physical therapist Howard Nelson for musician injury prevention and treatment. ■



Pam with Isaac during a lunch break in the Isaac Stern Chamber Music Workshop at Carnegie Hall, May 26, 1997. © Steve J. Sherman

## ABOUT YO-YO MA, *cello*

Yo-Yo Ma's multi-faceted career is a testament to his enduring belief in culture's power to generate trust and understanding. Whether performing new and familiar works from the cello repertoire, collaborating with communities and institutions to explore culture's role in society, or engaging unexpected musical forms, Ma strives to foster connections that stimulate the imagination and reinforce our humanity.

With partners from around the world and across disciplines, he creates programs that stretch the boundaries of genre and tradition to explore music-making not only as a means to share and express meaning, but also as a model for the cultural collaboration he considers essential to a strong society. It was this belief that inspired him to establish Silkroad, a collective of artists from around the world who create music that engages their many traditions.

In August 2018, Ma began a new journey, setting out to perform Johann Sebastian Bach's six suites for solo cello in one sitting in 36 locations around the world, iconic venues that encompass our cultural heritage, our current creativity, and the challenges of peace and understanding that will shape our future. Each concert will be an example of culture's power to create moments of shared understanding, as well as an invitation to a larger conversation about culture, society, and the themes that connect us all.

Ma was born in 1955 to Chinese parents living in Paris. He began to study the cello with his father at age 4 and three years later moved with his family to New York City, where he continued his cello studies with Leonard Rose



at the Juilliard School. After his conservatory training, he sought out a liberal arts education, graduating from Harvard University with a degree in anthropology in 1976. He has received numerous awards, including the Avery Fisher Prize (1978), Glenn Gould Prize (1999), National Medal of the Arts (2001), Dan David Prize (2006), World Economic Forum's Crystal Award (2008), Presidential Medal of Freedom (2010), Kennedy Center Honors (2011), Polar Music Prize (2012) and J. Paul Getty Medal Award (2016). He has performed for eight American presidents, most recently at the invitation of President Obama on the occasion of the 56th Inaugural Ceremony.

Ma and his wife have two children. He plays three instruments: a 2003 instrument made by Moes & Moes, a 1733 Montagnana cello from Venice, and the 1712 "Davidoff" Stradivarius. ■