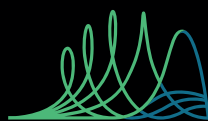


Rachmaninoff Celebration, Part Two PIANO CONCERTO NO. 3

FRIDAY, JUNE 5
SATURDAY, JUNE 6
SUNDAY, JUNE 7

MATTHIAS PINTSCHER,
MUSIC DIRECTOR AND CONDUCTOR
YEFIM BRONFMAN, PIANO



KANSAS CITY
SYMPHONY

Helzberg Hall, Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts

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Rachmaninoff Celebration, Part Two: Piano Concerto No. 3

Friday, June 5, 2026 at 8 p.m.
Saturday, June 6, 2026 at 8 p.m.
Sunday, June 7, 2026 at 2 p.m.

MATTHIAS PINTSCHER, MUSIC DIRECTOR AND CONDUCTOR
YEFIM BRONFMAN, PIANO

Helzberg Hall, Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts



SERGEI RACHMANINOFF Symphony No. 3 in A Minor, op. 44
I. Lento — Allegro moderato
II. Adagio ma non troppo
III. Allegro

Intermission

MATTHIAS PINTSCHER Aubade (Prélude pour Paul) for solo piano*
Yefim Bronfman, piano

SERGEI RACHMANINOFF Concerto No. 3 in D Minor for Piano
and Orchestra, op. 30
I. Allegro ma non tanto
II. Intermezzo
III. Finale
Yefim Bronfman, piano

* Aubade (Prélude pour Paul) commissioned by Paul Sekhri and Mark Gude and The Sekhri Family Foundation for the Kansas City Symphony Rachmaninoff Celebration, Matthias Pintscher, Music Director.

Matthias Pintscher

MUSIC DIRECTOR AND CONDUCTOR

Matthias Pintscher is the newly appointed music director of the Kansas City Symphony as of the 2024/25 season. He launched his tenure with a highly successful tour with the orchestra to Europe just before opening the season in Kansas City, with concerts at the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, the Berlin Philharmonie and Hamburg's Elbphilharmonie.



Highlights of the 2025/26 season include the world premiere of Pintscher's new opera *Das kalte Herz* by the Berlin State Opera, which he composed and will conduct and which will reprise in a French version titled *Nuit sans aube* at the Opéra-Comique in Paris in the same season. He returns to the Los Angeles Philharmonic and the Philadelphia Orchestra and will be in his sixth year as creative partner at the Cincinnati Symphony.

Pintscher was formerly the music director of the Ensemble Intercontemporain, and has held several titled positions, including nine seasons as BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra's artist-in-association, principal conductor of the Lucerne Festival Academy Orchestra, music director for the 2020 Ojai Festival and season creative chair with the Tonhalle-Orchester Zürich.

Pintscher's music is championed by some of today's finest performing artists, orchestras and conductors, and has been performed by the Boston Symphony, Chicago Symphony, Cleveland Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, Berlin Philharmonic, London Symphony Orchestra, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra and Orchestre de Paris, among many others.

Matthias Pintscher is published by Boosey & Hawkes; works written before 2023 are published by Bärenreiter. Recordings of his works can be found on Kairos, EMI, Teldec, Wergo and Winter & Winter.

Yefim Bronfman

PIANO

Internationally recognized as one of today's most acclaimed and admired pianists, Yefim Bronfman stands among a handful of artists regularly sought by festivals, orchestras, conductors and recital series. His commanding technique, power and exceptional lyrical gifts are consistently acknowledged by the press and audiences alike.

Bronfman has worked regularly with an illustrious group of conductors, including Daniel Barenboim, Herbert Blomstedt, Semyon Bychkov, Riccardo Chailly, Christoph von Dohnányi, Gustavo Dudamel, Charles Dutoit, Daniele Gatti, Alan Gilbert, Vladimir Jurowski, Zubin Mehta, Riccardo Muti, Andris Nelsons, Yannick Nézet-Séguin, Simon Rattle, Esa-Pekka Salonen, Jaap van Zweden, Franz Welser-Möst and David Zinman. Summer engagements have regularly taken him to the major festivals of Europe and the U.S. Always keen to explore chamber music repertoire, Bronfman has partnered with Pinchas Zukerman, Martha Argerich, Magdalena Kožená, Anne-Sophie Mutter, Emmanuel Pahud and many others. In 1991 he gave a series of joint recitals with Isaac Stern in Russia, marking Bronfman's first public performances there since his immigration to Israel at age 15.



Widely praised for his solo, chamber and orchestral recordings, Bronfman has been nominated for 6 GRAMMY® Awards, winning in 1997 with Esa-Pekka Salonen and the Los Angeles Philharmonic for their recording of the three Bartók piano concerti. His prolific catalog of recordings includes works for two pianos by Rachmaninoff and Brahms with Emanuel Ax, the complete Prokofiev concerti with the Israel Philharmonic and Zubin Mehta and the soundtrack to Disney's "Fantasia 2000."

Born in Tashkent in the Soviet Union, Yefim Bronfman immigrated to Israel with his family in 1973, where he studied with pianist Arie Vardi, head of the Rubín Academy of Music at Tel Aviv University. In the U.S., he studied at the Juilliard School, Marlboro School of Music and Curtis Institute of Music, under Rudolf Firkusny, Leon Fleisher and Rudolf Serkin. A recipient of the prestigious Avery Fisher Prize, one of the highest honors given to American instrumentalists, he was further honored in 2010 as the recipient of the Jean Gimbel Lane prize in piano performance from Northwestern University and in 2015 with an honorary doctorate from the Manhattan School of Music.

Symphony No. 3 in A Minor, op. 44 (1936)

SERGEI RACHMANINOFF (1873–1943)

39 MINUTES

Piccolo, 2 flutes, 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, bass drum, cymbals, snare drum, tam-tam, triangle, xylophone, harp, celesta and strings.

THE STORY

In the wake of the Russian Revolution in 1917, Sergei Rachmaninoff's estate was seized as communal property by members of the Social Revolutionary Party. After numerous months of trying to navigate the new and capricious politics, Rachmaninoff



received an offer to give a concert tour in Scandinavia. He immediately accepted, as this provided an opportunity to obtain travel permits, and he, his wife and his two daughters left Russia, never to return. They eventually made their way to the United States, where they lived from 1918 on. Rachmaninoff had to spend most of his time performing to earn a living. Concert tours were exhausting for him and left little time or energy for composing. He also associated composing with Russia, a place he had to leave and a culture that no longer existed as it had. He said in 1933, "When I left Russia, I left behind me my desire to compose: losing my country I lost myself also. To the exile whose musical roots, traditions and background have been annihilated, there remains no desire for self-expression."

Between 1918 and his death in 1943, Rachmaninoff completed only six original compositions. His Third Symphony is one of them, the second-to-last work of his to be published (the last is his *Symphonic Dances*, op. 45). He wrote it over the course of two stays at his villa

The Third Symphony is more compact and sparer in its melodies and textures, though it retains Rachmaninoff's signature sound.

in Switzerland, following the composition of his *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini*. The symphony premiered in November 1936 with Leopold Stokowski conducting the Philadelphia Orchestra. It was received coolly at best and negatively at worst. Rachmaninoff's biographer Barrie Martyn explains it this way: "The public had doubtless been misled by the old-style romanticism of the eighteenth Paganini variation and were perplexed to find that Rachmaninoff had after all advanced beyond the 1900s; the critics, on the other hand, condemned him just because they felt that he had not." Rachmaninoff, for his part, believed it was one of his best works. He conducted the Philadelphia Orchestra himself in the first recording of the piece in 1939.

THE MUSIC

Rachmaninoff's three symphonies were composed decades apart (1895, 1908 and 1936) and roughly delineate three stylistic periods of his music. The third is more compact and sparer in its melodies and textures, though it retains Rachmaninoff's signature sound. It is written in three movements rather than the usual four, but the central movement serves as both the adagio and the scherzo.

The first movement opens with a statement of the "motto" of the symphony, which will recur throughout, by the unusual combination of solo clarinet, solo muted horn and solo cello. After a loud flourish by the orchestra, a sweet yet sad melody is played by the woodwinds. The second theme of the movement is introduced by the cellos. This theme is not used in the development but receives its due in an extended recapitulation. At the quiet end of the movement, though, the motto has the last word.

Rachmaninoff Symphony No. 3 Program Notes (cont.)

The second movement begins with the motto inverted (upside down), played poetically this time by a solo horn accompanied only by the strumming of the harp. This is followed by a melody for solo violin, then another for unison violins, then another for solo flute — while this symphony may be compact and spare, the composer is not stingy with his melodic gifts. The scherzo section is brought in through some halting fragments in the violins and an acceleration to a faster tempo. Here also is a melody based on the motto. The slower tempo and its melodies from the beginning return to finish out the movement.

The last movement begins with the flourish from the start of the symphony before settling into a cheery dance. The expansive movement also encompasses singing melody, a technically brilliant fugue, more appearances of the motto and, as in many of Rachmaninoff's orchestral works, the "Dies irae" chant from the Requiem Mass (though presented here in a different rhythmic guise). All are woven together by the composer's sure hand before he brings the symphony to a vivid and celebratory ending.

— AJ Harbison

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Aubade (Prélude pour Paul) (2025)

MATTHIAS PINTSCHER
(b. 1971)

5 MINUTES

Solo piano.

The word “aubade” is French for “dawn serenade,” and over time it acquired the specific meaning of a love poem or love song at dawn. This prelude is intended to evoke a brief moment of reflection upon waking at dawn next to one’s love.



The music is meant to capture the nostalgia and elegance of Rachmaninoff’s compositions, particularly his preludes. Over the course of several minutes the prelude moves from the lowest register of the keyboard up to the highest and back down; it ends on a quiet open interval. In this performance it will lead directly into the piano concerto without a break.

The score bears the dedication “For Paul Sekhri and Yefim Bronfman, with admiration and gratitude.”

— *AJ Harbison*

Concerto No. 3 in D Minor for Piano and Orchestra, op. 30 (1909)

SERGEI RACHMANINOFF
(1873–1943)

39 MINUTES

*Solo piano, 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets,
2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets,
3 trombones, tuba, timpani, bass drum,
cymbals, snare drum, suspended cymbals
and strings.*



THE STORY

A decade before the tumult of the Russian Revolution and Rachmaninoff's self-exile from Russia, he was vacationing in Dresden, Germany. While there he received an offer for a concert tour in America, being presented as composer, conductor and pianist. Rachmaninoff was often strapped for cash, so he accepted and decided to compose a work especially for the tour. Perhaps thinking of the successful premiere of his Second Piano Concerto nearly ten years before, he set to work on a new concerto that he could perform as the soloist.

The premiere of the Third Piano Concerto took place on November 28, 1909, with Rachmaninoff playing the solo part and Walter Damrosch conducting the New York Symphony Society (one of the predecessors of today's New York Philharmonic). Later on the tour, in January, Rachmaninoff played it again with Gustav Mahler on the podium. Rachmaninoff wrote that he treasured this experience:

He devoted himself to the concerto until the accompaniment, which is rather complicated, had been practiced to perfection, although he had already gone through another long rehearsal. According to Mahler, every detail of the score was important — an attitude too rare amongst conductors.

Critical reaction to the concerto was mixed after the premiere, though it warmed in the ten years following and eventually became more popular in America than the Second Concerto (partly because it had been

specifically written for the American tour). As for Rachmaninoff, he considered the Third his favorite of his own concertos, saying, “I much prefer the Third, because my Second is so uncomfortable to play.” Many pianists then and now have disagreed; the Third is considered one of the most technically challenging concertos ever written.

THE MUSIC

The concerto starts unassumingly: two short bars of introduction and then the piano entrance with the main theme, quiet and played in simple octaves. Once the theme has been presented the piano gets going with fast arpeggios, but still soft and in an accompanying role as the orchestra gets its turn with the theme. The major-key second theme, sweet and nostalgic, is introduced by the piano alone at first. The return of the first melody signals the start of the development section where Rachmaninoff plays with themes and fragments in creative ways. This section concludes with the cadenza, which also begins quietly but quickly works itself into a frenzy. Solo woodwinds interrupt, playing melodic fragments over filigreed arpeggios in the piano. But then the cadenza continues with a development of the second theme. Chords in the horns bring back the full orchestra, but after just a quick recap of the main theme the movement ends.

The second movement intermezzo is a theme and variations, featuring a long-spun singing melody initially in the orchestra moving through constantly shifting chords. The piano almost interrupts with its entrance, playing several variations of the theme, alternately soft and stormy. Unlike some

theme-and-variations movements, the variations are not clearly delineated with pauses but flow naturally in and out of each other in a continuous musical current. After an extended passage without

the piano, the soloist returns with flourishes and leads directly into the third movement without a break. Much of the piano’s music in the movement is toccata-like, with extremely quick repeated notes requiring an exceptional lightness of touch — but there are plenty of crashing chords as well. In lieu of a development section the two themes from the first movement make reappearances. Multiple tempo changes lead to a section of longing, sweeping passion, taking the pianist up to the top of the keyboard (and the very highest note on the instrument). One last acceleration brings soloist and orchestra to the final forceful chords.

Rachmaninoff’s Third is considered one of the most technically challenging concertos ever written.

— *AJ Harbison*

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Kansas City Symphony

In only its 44th season, the Kansas City Symphony has already become one of America's most vibrant major orchestras and has gained national and international recognition. With the 2024/25 season, the Symphony welcomed conductor and composer Matthias Pintscher as its new music director. Pintscher regularly conducts many of the world's best orchestras and opera companies and ranks as one of the world's foremost composers of orchestral music.

Continually creating live music experiences in Helzberg Hall, located in the prestigious Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts, the Symphony serves Kansas City's metro population of more than 2.2 million people as well as welcoming visitors from around the globe. The Symphony's 80 full-time musicians from around the world bring a diverse and dynamic range of musical experiences to our audiences in both orchestral and chamber music formats each season. In addition to concerts in Helzberg Hall, Symphony musicians perform throughout the region on our portable stage, the Mobile Music Box. The Symphony also serves as the orchestra for the Kansas City Ballet and the Lyric Opera of Kansas City, adding to the rich cultural experiences that these organizations offer to the community.

Top international soloists perform with the Kansas City Symphony every season, including brilliant classical musicians, popular singer/songwriters, rock bands and other creative performers. The Symphony also performs live soundtracks for a variety of fan-favorite films, with the movie projected on a giant screen above the stage.

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