

BEETHOVEN 1 & 2

📅 SEPTEMBER 29, 2019

🕒 2:30 P.M.

📍 THE ISABEL

Evan Mitchell *Conductor*

PROGRAM

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| O Canada | LAVALLÉE (1842-1891) ARR. WAGLER |
| Overture to Egmont | BEETHOVEN (1770-1827) |
| Symphony No. 1 in C Major, Op. 21 <i>Adagio molto - Allegro con brio</i> <i>Andante cantabile con moto</i> <i>Menuetto: Allegro molto e vivace</i> <i>Finale: Adagio - Allegro molto e vivace</i> | BEETHOVEN |

INTERMISSION

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| Symphony No. 2 in D Major, Op. 36 <i>Adagio molto - Allegro con brio</i> <i>Larghetto</i> <i>Scherzo: Allegro</i> <i>Allegro molto</i> | BEETHOVEN |
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TODAY'S MUSIC

with Evan Mitchell

One of the most intriguing aspects of this season's musical trek through Beethoven's entire symphonic offerings is charting the progress of a visionary. My conducting teacher once told me that Beethoven's greatest contribution to the symphonic form was his ability to break new ground in each of his nine symphonies. That's absolutely true. But to me, what is most fascinating about the roadmap of Beethoven's singular symphonic output is that he ended up following the path of all great composers: learning the rules, breaking the rules, transcending the rules.

That's not to say there aren't surprises in his early works. Beethoven immediately presents the listener with a tiny harmonic odyssey in his First Symphony, which seems to point to anything but the title key of C Major. It serves as a bright flare, indicating a disruptor at work. Similarly, the third movement of his First Symphony bucks the traditional pairing of minuet-and-trio dance forms in favour of what becomes a Beethoven staple: the Scherzo. Although the movement is titled Menuetto, the tempo marks a much more energized and rambunctious treatment of the third movement than a backward-looking set of dance forms ever did.

The Second Symphony starts out as a refinement of the sensibilities witnessed in the First Symphony, but represents a clear step forward in virtually every regard. It's worth

noting that the Second Symphony is one of Beethoven's most upbeat works, even though it coincided with his impending deafness, perhaps the darkest period of his life. Moments of parallel musical strife are few and far between, but my favourite moment is a fleeting dark passage in D minor less than 60 seconds into the symphony, which foreshadows a dramatic gesture Beethoven uses years later in his Ninth Symphony.

These fledgling symphonies, with their orchestral quirks, structural surprises, and harmonic innovations, reveal a creative composer testing the waters. Following a magnificent opening salvo, the symphonic world suddenly opens before Beethoven.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention O Canada, which was arranged specifically for the Kingston Symphony by Trevor Wagler, and contains quotations from all nine symphonies. The Overture to Egmont, which kicks off the program, showcases Beethoven at his most dramatic and is a fitting way to launch this monumental season. I sincerely hope that many of you join this pilgrimage and stay with it until the final strains of the Ninth. It will be a journey like no other, I promise.