

BEETHOVEN 4 & RACHMANINOFF

Avan Yu *Piano*
Evan Mitchell *Conductor*

PROGRAM

Coming Together

RZEWSKI (1938-)

Piano Concerto No. 1 in F Sharp minor, Op. 1

RACHMANINOFF (1873-1943)

Vivace

Andante

Allegro vivace

INTERMISSION

Symphony No. 4 in B Flat Major, Op. 60

BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)

Adagio - Allegro vivace

Adagio

Allegro vivace

Allegro ma non troppo

📅 DECEMBER 1, 2019

🕒 2:30 P.M.

📍 THE ISABEL

TODAY'S MUSIC

with Evan Mitchell

Following the progression of Beethoven's symphonies allows us to view a snapshot of a specific period in his life, as well as his growth as a composer. The Fourth Symphony, dubbed "a slender Greek maiden between two Norse giants" by Robert Schumann, reflects Beethoven's ascent to maturity. Today's other works also mirror that moment in their respective composers' lives. Having established themselves, they begin to assert their unique musical voices.

We begin with Frederic Rzewski's minimalist masterpiece, *Coming Together*. Composed in 1972, it represents the beginning of his mature period, which can be characterized by deep, significant, emotionally resonant works, and a laser focus on political inspiration and messaging. *Coming Together* was written for no fixed ensemble; the instruments in any given performance vary. The music itself exists only as a single line. Performance instructions dictate that each individual section be performed in specific and alternating styles, dynamics, and instrument groupings. Meanwhile, a narrator reads excerpts from a letter by Samuel Melville, a prisoner at Attica Correctional Facility in New York. One of the leaders in the 1971 Attica riot, Melville became a powerful muse for Rzewski.

Rachmaninoff's First Piano Concerto is his Opus 1, meaning that it is the first piece of music he wrote that he deemed worthy of publication. He composed it at the age of 18,

which seems at odds with the notion of musical maturity. But the commonly performed edition of this work (which we enjoy today) is one that underwent massive revisions when Rachmaninoff returned to the piece at age 44. The solo piano part and the orchestral accompaniment were largely rewritten, but with a mind to retaining the vivacious spirit of the original. Rachmaninoff, a consummate pessimist, was actually quite pleased with the revisions and considered them hugely successful. It remains an epic, sweeping and bold entry into the piano concerto canon, a masterwork from one of the greats.

Similarly, Beethoven's Fourth asserts maturity, brilliance, and even comfort within the symphonic medium. From the mysterious darkness of the introduction we are led to a largely upbeat, brilliant work, which alternates between bombast, lyricism, and wonder. While it's not the flashiest of the nine, it is arguably the most personal, with soft surprises and heart-stopping slow movements. The surest mark of a top-level composition from a consummate master is one that has nothing to prove, and remains remarkable simply by virtue of its impossibly good craft. Beethoven's Fourth remains a favourite of mine for precisely those reasons.