

BEETHOVEN 6 & STRAVINSKY

Aria Evans *Dancer*
Evan Mitchell *Conductor*

 FEBRUARY 9, 2020
 2:30 P.M.
 THE ISABEL

PROGRAM

The Rite of Spring

STRAVINSKY (1882-1971)

Part I: Adoration of the Earth

Introduction

The Augurs of Spring - Dances of the Young Girls

Ritual of Abduction

Spring Rounds

Ritual of the Rival Tribes

Procession of the Sage

The Sage

Dance of the Earth

Part II: The Sacrifice

Introduction

Mystic Circle of the Young Girls

Glorification of the Chosen One

Evocation of the Ancestors

Ritual Action of the Ancestors

Sacrificial Dance (The Chosen One)

INTERMISSION

Symphony No. 6 in F Major, Op. 68

BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)

Awakening of cheerful feelings upon arrival in the country

Scene at the brook

Happy gathering of country folk

Thunder; Storm

Shepards' song; cheerful and thankful feelings after the storm

TODAY'S MUSIC

with Evan Mitchell

I confess that my first professional experience with Beethoven's Sixth Symphony (one of Beethoven's most beloved and personal) was very traumatic. The morning of the dress rehearsal I received a phone call at 5:45 a.m. from Bramwell Tovey, my boss and the music director of the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra. He was so ill he could barely stand and I would need to conduct the dress rehearsal and possibly the concert, consisting of Beethoven's Sixth Symphony and Violin Concerto, with soloist Anne-Sophie Mutter, which would be recorded by the CBC.

Fortunately, Bramwell was well enough to conduct the evening concert, but the Sixth remained a stressful symphony for me for years to come. This is somewhat ironic considering it's such a gentle look at the beauty of the countryside. I have thankfully overcome the panicked association I once had with this masterpiece, and I'm glad for that because it means I can save my anxiety this afternoon for Stravinsky's magnum opus *The Rite of Spring*, which provides a rather dramatic counterbalance in its starkly opposing musical view of nature. While both these pieces worship the earth, they definitely go about it in very different ways.

The Rite of Spring remains the most important orchestral piece written in the 20th century. It's so forward thinking you could easily mistake it for a more contemporary composition rather than one written over 100 years ago. A musical exploration of a sacrificial ritual to the earth for a good harvest, it spans the ceremony from start to finish of the tribe convening, choosing a young girl and exalting her, and her eventual sacrificial dance as an offering to the gods. It's breathtaking, savage, beautiful, perfect. No composer before or since has so innately tapped into the raw, undiluted power of nature. The result is unforgettable.

Beethoven's Sixth, a more gentle and personal testament to nature and its beauty, unfolds like a love letter. Simple and straightforward in appearance, the melodies and harmonic language take us through the mind of a man who loved the countryside more than anything else. From the music praising the plains, to the babbling brook and the gratefulness of the people for the calm after the rainstorm, it's a touching, heartfelt thanks to nature for the great gift of life. It remains one of Beethoven's truest masterworks.