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SCOTTISH  
CHAMBER  
ORCHESTRA


# Beethoven's 'Pastoral' Symphony

20-21 Mar 2025

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# Beethoven's 'Pastoral' Symphony

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**Thursday 20 March, 7.30pm** The Queen's Hall, Edinburgh  
**Friday 21 March, 7.30pm** City Halls, Glasgow

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**AARON JAY KERNIS** Musica Celestis

**EÖTVÖS** Aurora for double bass solo and string orchestra with accordion (UK Premiere)

*Commissioned by the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, Karajan Academy of the Berlin Philharmonic, Lausanne Chamber Orchestra and Tongyeong International Music Festival*

*Interval of 20 minutes*

**BEETHOVEN** Symphony No 6 'Pastoral'

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**Richard Egarr** Conductor\*

**Nikita Naumov** Double bass



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*\*Please note: There has been a change to the originally advertised concert. Mark Wigglesworth will no longer be able to take part in this concert, but we are grateful to Richard Egarr who will now conduct these performances.*

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Our Musicians

# YOUR ORCHESTRA TONIGHT

*Information correct at the time of going to print*

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Emma Baird  
Kana Kawashima  
Aisling O'Dea  
Fiona Alexander  
Amira Bedrush-McDonald  
Sarah Bevan Baker

## **Second Violin**

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Michelle Dierx  
Rachel Spencer  
Tom Hankey  
Catherine James  
Will McGahan

## **Viola**

Jessica Beeston  
Zoë Matthews  
Brian Schiele  
Steve King

## **Cello**

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Su-a Lee  
Donald Gillan  
Eric de Wit

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Nigel Cox

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Louise Lewis Goodwin

## **Accordion**

Djordje Gagic

**Kana Kawashima**  
First Violin



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# WHAT YOU ARE ABOUT TO HEAR

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## AARON JAY KERNIS (b.1960)

Musica Celestis (1990)

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## EÖTVÖS (1944-2024)

Aurora for double bass solo and string  
orchestra with accordion (2019)

(UK Premiere)

I  
II  
III

*Commissioned by the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, Karajan  
Academy of the Berlin Philharmonic, Lausanne Chamber  
Orchestra and Tongyeong International Music Festival.*

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## BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)

Symphony No 6 in F major, Op 68,  
'Pastoral' (1802-1808)

**Allegro ma non troppo**

**Andante molto mosso**

**Allegro**

**Allegro**

**Allegretto**

If you drill down into its most fundamental elements, music, of course, is inseparable from nature, or at least natural forces and processes. Even among the SCO's musicians in front of you this evening, just think of the vibrating columns of air inside flutes and trumpets (and other wind instruments, for that matter) that give those instruments their distinctive sounds. Or think of the similarly vibrating lengths of wire (or, occasionally, gut), set in motion by horsehair and amplified by carefully shaped wooden boxes, that make up an orchestra's string section. On a more cosmic scale, it's hardly surprising that ancient philosophers speculated about musical relationships between planetary orbits, their respective rhythms lasting years or more, and the results permeating the very souls of humankind.

So to think of music being inspired or influenced by nature partly misses the bigger point that music simply is nature, albeit corralled, arranged and refined by humans (and, arguably, a few other animals too). Nonetheless, nature lies behind the three pieces in tonight's concert, which zoom in from the vast, mystical expanses of space via an awe-inducing cosmic phenomenon perceived from our home planet, and finally focus on a single human's contemplation of his relationship with the natural world around him.

Philadelphia-born, New York-based Aaron Jay Kernis is one of America's most accomplished contemporary composers: he's taught at Yale University, won a Grammy Award and a Pulitzer Prize, and created music for many of the country's most prestigious musical ensembles. He studied in San Francisco



Aaron Jay Kernis

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with John Adams, and cites minimalism as a pervasive influence across his music, which also takes in lush 19th-century Romanticism, Debussy-like impressionism and even hip-hop. He wrote tonight's opening piece, *Musica celestis*, in 1990, and it counts as one of his best-known and best-loved works, showing clear parallels, too, with the concept of the music of the spheres in its more theological depictions. Kernis writes about the piece:

*"Musica celestis is inspired by the medieval conception of that phrase which refers to the singing of the angels in heaven in praise of God without end. 'The office of singing pleases God if it is performed with an attentive mind, when in this way we imitate the choirs of angels who are said to sing the Lord's praises*

*without ceasing.'* (Aurelian of Réôme, translated by Barbara Newman) *I don't particularly believe in angels, but found this to be a potent image that has been reinforced by listening to a good deal of medieval music, especially the soaring work of Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179). This movement follows a simple, spacious melody and harmonic pattern through a number of variations (like a passacaglia) and modulations, and is framed by an introduction and coda".*

From the music of heaven itself (or perhaps of the heavens), we descend towards the Earth, but before hitting the ground we'll pause at 30,000 feet or so. Transylvanian-born Péter Eötvös was a hugely influential figure in 20th- and 21st-century avant-garde music as a noted conductor and close collaborator with



Péter Eötvös

Transylvanian-born Péter Eötvös was a hugely influential figure in 20th- and 21st-century avant-garde music as a noted conductor and close collaborator with Stockhausen and Boulez, among many other composers, as well as a celebrated composer of colourful, dramatic, intensely expressive music in his own right.

Stockhausen and Boulez, among many other composers, as well as a celebrated composer of colourful, dramatic, intensely expressive music in his own right, including no fewer than 14 operas, many film and theatre scores, and a huge number of orchestral and chamber works. Eötvös died almost exactly a year ago, on 24 March 2024, at the age of 80. He wrote about his 2019 double bass concerto *Aurora*:

*"In 1971, I was flying over Anchorage in Alaska when I saw an incredible light effect through the aeroplane window: it was the aurora borealis. I have never ever seen anything so powerful or such a blaze of colour in motion. It was not only beautiful, but also extremely powerful, almost threatening and simply monumental. In my composition Aurora, I have attempted*

*to reproduce my own impressions of this moment when I felt myself as an element of this cosmos.*

*Aurora is my first piece for solo double bass. Up until now, I have always used the lower registers of this instrument and was astounded that the double bass could also soar up into the highest ranges, sounding as powerful and colourful as the aurora borealis itself. Accompanying the solo double bass in a small string orchestra and an accordion, as well as two additional orchestral double basses, which are placed in the concert hall to form a triangle with the soloist!"*

If *Aurora* recounts its composer's own responses to a powerful natural phenomenon, then tonight's final piece – though written more than two centuries

earlier, and using a very different musical language – attempts something similar.

In his 'Pastoral' Symphony, No 6, we might imagine that Beethoven was breaking new symphonic ground in his detailed depictions of nature, his vivid musical portrait of the countryside. And yes, there's a bit of that in the piece. But in fact, surprisingly little: a babbling brook, a few bird calls, some jolly dancing peasants and a tumultuous storm. Nor was a symphony that aimed to evoke nature a particularly new idea: Justin Heinrich Knecht had pulled off something similar 25 years before Beethoven in his *Portrait musical de la nature*, and set something of a trend in the process.

What's fresher and more unusual about Beethoven's 'Pastoral' Symphony is that it examines humankind's relationship with nature, and more specifically Beethoven's own, rather than simply painting a pretty picture. The composer said as much when he described it as 'more an expression of feeling than tone painting'. He's known to have loved being in the countryside, taking long walks on the outskirts of Vienna, and spending almost every summer far from the city. He wrote to his friend (and possible dedicatee of 'Für Elise') Therese Malfatti: 'how delighted I shall be to ramble for a while through bushes, woods, under trees, over grass and rocks. No one can love the country as much as I do.'

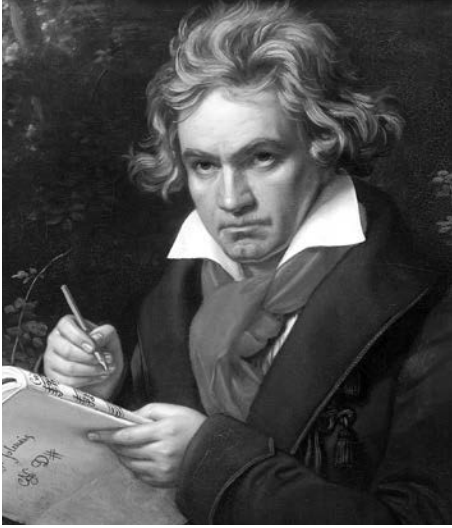
It's probably not too far-fetched to suggest that immersing himself in nature provided a sense of solace and consolation from Beethoven's loneliness and his increasing deafness, with the inevitable sense of despair it provoked. Indeed, he's known to have begun work on the 'Pastoral'

Symphony in 1802, the same year that he planned to reveal his contemplation of suicide to his brothers in the unsent letter that's become known as the Heiligenstadt Testament.

The journey the Symphony charts is very much an internal, even heroic, one, through danger and trauma to spiritual gratitude and fulfilment. With its joyfully uncomplicated opening material – a bagpipe-like drone in the cellos and basses, with a simple, rustic melody in the violins – there's no doubt as to the mood and location of Beethoven's first movement, which he titles 'The awakening of happy feelings on arriving in the country'. Nonetheless, just as he does in the famous opening of his Fifth Symphony (which he was working on concurrently), Beethoven derives the rest of his opening movement almost entirely from these basic opening ideas, even if it's with very different results.

His second movement, 'Scene by the Brook', contains the Symphony's clearest evocations of nature's own sounds: the stream ripples through the entire movement in the strings' incessant rhythms, and Beethoven quotes birdsong in the violins and flutes, and most clearly near the end of the movement, where he labels his avian visitors as a nightingale (flute), quail (oboe) and cuckoo (clarinets).

His lively third movement, 'Merry gathering of country folk', marks the beginning of a continuous flow of music that will take the Symphony through to its conclusion. Beethoven presents a vibrant Austrian peasant dance in a witty evocation of a country band, whose players miss their cue by a single beat and come in on the



*Ludwig van Beethoven*

**What's fresher and more unusual about Beethoven's 'Pastoral' Symphony is that it examines humankind's relationship with nature, and more specifically Beethoven's own, rather than simply painting a pretty picture.**

'wrong' note – though the composer's writing is warmly affectionate rather than mocking. Indeed, he even half-jokingly suggested he might join them in their supposedly simple life, giving up music entirely should the deterioration in his hearing prevent him from continuing.

Beethoven's peasant idyll is interrupted, however, by the first, distant rumblings of a fast-approaching storm, which erupts across the orchestra in all manner of unconventional sonic effects, from scrubbing string tremolos and surging timpani rolls, to snarling trombones and a shrill wind whistling from the piccolo.

The storm passes, however, and Beethoven allows us a glimpse into the profound calm and consolation he gains from nature in his restrained, luminous, deeply spiritual

finale, which he titles 'Shepherd's song. Happy and thankful feelings after the storm'. After a brief moment of two keys happening simultaneously as his opening clarinet hands over its tune to a horn (an effect that 20th-century composers would take up far more extensively), Beethoven spins his quiet, unassuming opening violin melody to ever greater visionary splendour as the movement progresses. His shrill piccolo is left behind, but he retains his two trombones, no doubt feeling their ecclesiastical connotations appropriate for this hymn of thanks. But this is no Christian act of worship from Beethoven the (probable) atheist: having endured the violence of the storm, he expresses his gratitude instead to the natural world itself, in all its vast, dangerous variety.

© **David Kettle**

Conductor

## RICHARD EGARR



Richard Egarr is Principal Guest of the Residentie Orkest, Artistic Partner of the St Paul Chamber and Music Director Emeritus of the Philharmonia Baroque. He was Music Director of the Academy of Ancient Music 2005-2020 and Associate Artist with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra 2011-2017.

He straddles the worlds of historically-informed and modern symphonic performance and has conducted many leading symphony orchestras, notably the London Symphony, Royal Concertgebouw and Philadelphia orchestras.

As well as an accomplished conductor he is a brilliant harpsichordist, and equally skilled on the organ and fortepiano, playing recitals at major venues such as Wigmore and Carnegie Hall. His extensive discography includes solo discs on Harmonia Mundi and on Linn, for whom he also records as half of Duo Pleyel (four hands historic keyboards). Together with the Academy of Ancient Music he has won Gramophone Awards in 2007 (Handel) and 2021 (Dussek).

He trained as a choirboy at York Minster, was organ scholar at Clare College Cambridge, and later studied with Gustav and Marie Leonhardt. He teaches at the Amsterdam Conservatoire and is Visiting Artist at the Juilliard School in New York.

*For full biography please visit [sco.org.uk](http://sco.org.uk)*

Double bass

## NIKITA NAUMOV



Born in Russia, Nikita attended the Karaganda Special Music School in Kazakhstan. He then studied at the Rimsky-Korsakov Conservatoire in St Petersburg, during which time he was invited to study at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, funded by the Leverhulme Trust.

Nikita has recently become Principal Double Bass with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra after being Principal Double Bass with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra for 14 years. He has worked with many of the finest orchestras and played as a guest principal with the London Symphony Orchestra, BBC Symphony Orchestra, Royal Northern Sinfonia, Royal Scottish National Orchestra, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, BBC National Orchestra of Wales, Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra, Netherlands Philharmonic Orchestra, Amsterdam Sinfonietta and the Stavanger Symphony Orchestra.

He regularly appears as a soloist and has won numerous prizes, including at the 2012 Koussevitzky double bass competition in St Petersburg. His solo performances include, Hallgrímsson's *Sonnambulo* for Double Bass with the Reykjavik Chamber Orchestra in Iceland, Tübin's Double Bass Concerto at the Pärnu music festival, Koussevitzky's Double Bass Concerto with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra on tour in Scotland and with the St Petersburg Camerata at the Musical Olympus festival, Bottesini's *Lucia di Lammermoor* with the Karaganda Symphony Orchestra, a recital at The Cumnock Tryst including Vask's *Bass Trip*, Bottesini's Concerto alla Mendelssohn, Rachmaninoff's *Vocalise* with Lars Vogt at Heimbach "Spannungen" Kammermusik Festival and Bottesini's Gran Duo Concertante with Benjamin Marquise Gilmore and the Scottish Chamber Orchestra. Nikita is a friend of the Scottish Bass Trust with whom he frequently performs recitals and with whom he partly commissioned *Sonnambulo*.

Nikita regularly leads master classes around the world and teaches double bass at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland.

*For full biography please visit [sco.org.uk](http://sco.org.uk)*



Biography

## SCOTTISH CHAMBER ORCHESTRA



The Scottish Chamber Orchestra (SCO) is one of Scotland's five National Performing Companies and has been a galvanizing force in Scotland's music scene since its inception in 1974. The SCO believes that access to world-class music is not a luxury but something that everyone should have the opportunity to participate in, helping individuals and communities everywhere to thrive. Funded by the Scottish Government, City of Edinburgh Council and a community of philanthropic supporters, the SCO has an international reputation for exceptional, idiomatic performances: from mainstream classical music to newly commissioned works, each year its wide-ranging programme of work is presented across the length and breadth of Scotland, overseas and increasingly online.

Equally at home on and off the concert stage, each one of the SCO's highly talented and creative musicians and staff is passionate about transforming and enhancing lives through the power of music. The SCO's Creative Learning programme engages people of all ages and backgrounds with a diverse range of projects, concerts, participatory workshops and resources. The SCO's current five-year Residency in Edinburgh's Craigmillar builds on the area's extraordinary history of Community Arts, connecting the local community with a national cultural resource.

An exciting new chapter for the SCO began in September 2019 with the arrival of dynamic young conductor Maxim Emelyanychev as the Orchestra's Principal Conductor. His tenure has recently been extended until 2028. The SCO and Emelyanychev released their first album together (Linn Records) in November 2019 to widespread critical acclaim. Their second recording together, of Mendelssohn symphonies, was released in November 2023. Their latest recording, of Schubert Symphonies Nos 5 and 8, was released on 1 November.

The SCO also has long-standing associations with many eminent guest conductors and directors including Principal Guest Conductor Andrew Manze, Pekka Kuusisto, François Leleux, Nicola Benedetti, Isabelle van Keulen, Anthony Marwood, Richard Egarr, Mark Wigglesworth, Lorenza Borrani and Conductor Emeritus Joseph Swensen.

The Orchestra's current Associate Composer is Jay Capperauld. The SCO enjoys close relationships with numerous leading composers and has commissioned around 200 new works, including pieces by Sir James MacMillan, Anna Clyne, Sally Beamish, Martin Suckling, Einojuhani Rautavaara, Karin Rehnqvist, Mark-Anthony Turnage, Nico Muhly and the late Peter Maxwell Davies.

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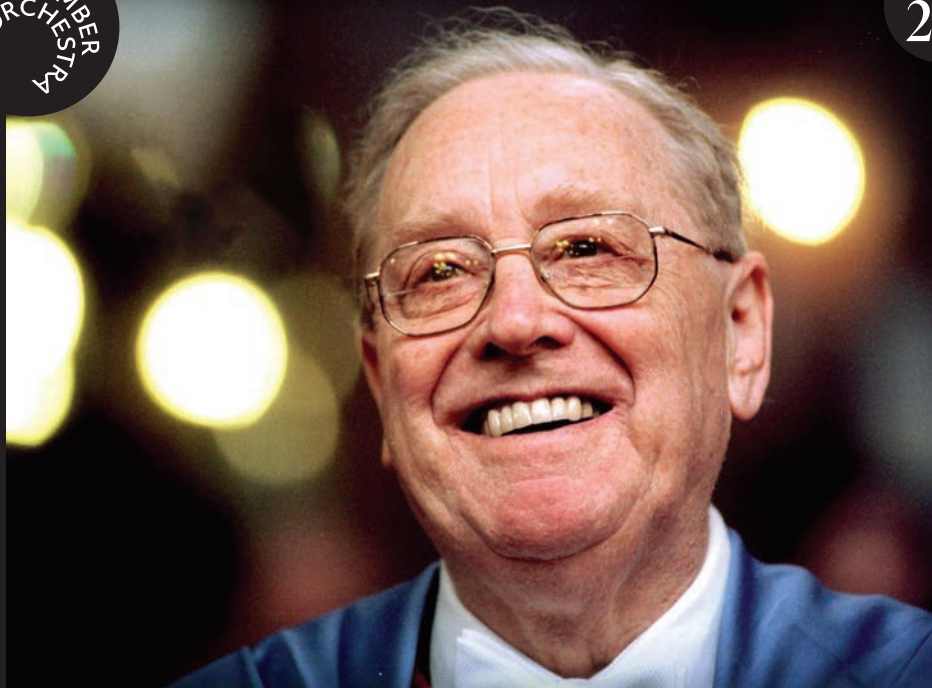
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**Sir Charles Mackerras**  
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