



MODESTO  
SYMPHONY  
ORCHESTRA  
NICHOLAS HERSH  
— MUSIC DIRECTOR —

## About the Show

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*Modesto Symphony Orchestra Association*

### **Tchaikovsky & Copland**

Friday, October 13, 2023, 7:30 pm

Saturday, October 14, 2023, 7:30 pm

Gallo Center for the Arts, Mary Stuart Rogers Theater

Nicholas Hersh, *conductor*

Alessio Bax, *piano*

## Program

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*Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)*

**Overture to *The Marriage of Figaro* KV492 (1786)**

*Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893)*

**Piano Concerto No.1 in B-flat minor, Op. 23 (1875)**

- I. Allegro
- II. Andantino
- III. Allegro

*Alessio Bax, piano*

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INTERMISSION

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*Aaron Copland (1900-1990)*

**Symphony No. 3 (1946)**

- I. Molto moderato
- II. Allegro molto
- III. Andantino quasi allegretto
- IV. Molto deliberato

## Roster

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**Orchestra Roster**

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## Tchaikovsky & Copland

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Nicholas Hersh, conductor

***Violin 1***

Ilana Blumberg, *concertmaster*  
Dagenais Smiley, *associate concertmaster*  
Tingting Gu, *assistant concertmaster*  
Joseph Galamba  
Xander Abbe  
Kirstan Hilton  
Mark Neyshloss  
Milka Kraleva-Castro  
Alexandros Petrin  
Matthew Oshida  
Sangeeta Swamy  
Kimberly Hain

***Violin 2***

Myriam Cotton-Rack, *principal*  
Tammie Dyer, *assistant principal*  
Sarah Elert  
Paul Kim  
Juan Carlos-Guitierrez  
Donald Grishaw  
Josephine Gray  
Donna Harrison  
Amy Lindsey  
Ray Reinebach

***Viola***

Patricia Whaley, *principal*  
Kathryn Juneau, *assistant principal*  
Valerie Tisdell  
Colin Belisle  
James Een  
Nao Kubota  
Lisa Ponton  
Lauren Elledge

***Cello***

Richard Andaya, *principal*  
Erin Wang, *assistant principal*  
Daniel Davies  
Hannah Harrington  
Farley Pearce  
Megan Chartier  
Eric Sheaffer

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William Laney

**Bass**

Raymond Vargas, *principal*  
Sukyung Chun, *assistant principal*  
Zachary Iscoff  
Kody Thiessen  
Chris Yick  
Nicholas Vegas

**Flute**

Johanna Borenstein, *principal*  
Debra Dix  
Gail Edwards, *piccolo*  
Catherine Baker, *piccolo*

**Oboe**

Rong-Huey Liu, *principal*  
Michael Johnson  
Jesse Barrett, *english horn*

**Clarinet**

Robert Patterson, *principal*  
Besnik Abrashi  
Michael Corner, *e-flat clarinet*  
Victor Martinez Jara, *bass clarinet*

**Bassoon**

Jeff Robinson, *principal*  
Carolyn Lockhart  
Katherine Ruiz, *contra bassoon*

**Horn**

William Klingelhoffer, *principal*  
Logan Bryck, *assistant principal*  
Mark Jansen  
Nicky Roosevelt  
William Harrington

**Trumpet**

Joe Brown, *principal (Copland)*  
Bryce Schmidt, *principal*

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Robert Giambruno  
Nathan Johnson

***Trombone***

Don Benham, *principal*

Katie Curran  
Wayne Solomon

***Tuba***

Rod Matthews, *principal*

***Timpani***

John Weeks, *principal*

***Percussion***

Thomas Rance, *principal*

Joseph Runnels  
Matthew Darling  
Kris Lou

***Harp***

Dan Levitan, *principal*  
Laura Porter

***Piano***

John Hillenbrandt

***Celeste***

Kathryn Eames

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*Roster as of 10/9/2023*

**Artist Biographies**

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**Nicholas Hersh**

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conductor

American conductor Nicholas Hersh has earned critical acclaim for his innovative programming and natural ability to connect with musicians and audiences alike.

In the 2023-24 season, Hersh returns to the National, Houston, Baltimore, Colorado, and New Jersey Symphonies, while making debuts with the Springfield Symphony and Wintergreen Festival. Recent include engagements with the Detroit, Grand Rapids, New World, North Carolina, Phoenix, Portland (ME), Richmond, Tucson, Utah, and Winston-Salem symphony orchestras, Louisiana and Rochester Philharmonics, and the Florida and Sarasota Orchestras.

Over a remarkable tenure as Associate Conductor of the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, Hersh created the BSO Pulse series, through which he brought together indie bands and orchestral musicians in unique collaborations; he led the BSO in several subscription weeks, and concerts in and around Baltimore; and he directed the BSO's educational and family programming, including the celebrated Academy for adult amateur musicians. Hersh also maintains a close relationship with the National Symphony Orchestra, leading concerts throughout Washington, D.C. He stepped in to replace an indisposed Yan Pascal Tortelier, on subscription, to great acclaim.

Hersh is frequently in demand as an arranger and orchestrator, with commissions from orchestras around the globe for adaptations of everything from classical solo and chamber music to popular songs. His orchestration of Beethoven's Cello Sonata Op. 69 was premiered by the Philharmonie Zuidnederland in January 2022, while his symphonic arrangement of Queen's [Bohemian Rhapsody](#) continues to see worldwide success as a viral YouTube hit. He also serves as arranger and editor for the James P. Johnson Orchestra Edition.

Hersh grew up in Evanston, Illinois and started his musical training as a cellist. He earned a Bachelor's Degree in Music from Stanford University and a Master's Degree in Conducting from the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music. Hersh is



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also a two-time recipient of the Solti Foundation Career Assistance Award. Nicholas lives in Philadelphia with his wife Caitlin and their two cats, and in his free time enjoys baking (and eating) sourdough bread.



**Alessio Bax**

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piano

Combining exceptional lyricism and insight with consummate technique, Alessio Bax is without a doubt “among the most remarkable young pianists now before the public” (Gramophone). He catapulted to prominence with First Prize wins at both the Leeds and Hamamatsu International Piano Competitions, and is now a familiar face on five continents, not only as a recitalist and chamber musician, but also as a concerto soloist who has appeared with more than 150 orchestras, including the London, Royal, and St. Petersburg Philharmonic Orchestras, the New York, Boston, Dallas, Cincinnati, Seattle, Sydney, and City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestras, and the NHK Symphony in Japan, collaborating with such eminent conductors as Marin Alsop, Vladimir Ashkenazy, Sir Andrew Davis, Fabio Luisi, Sir Simon Rattle, Yuri Temirkanov, and Jaap van Zweden.

Bax constantly explores many facets of his career. He released his eleventh Signum Classics album, *Italian Inspirations*, whose program was also the vehicle for his solo recital debut at New York’s 92nd Street Y as well as on tour. He recently debuted with the New York Philharmonic Orchestra, playing Schumann Concerto and the Seattle Symphony with Saint-Saëns’ Second Piano Concerto and embarked on a trio tour of Spain with violinist Joshua Bell and cellist Steven Isserlis. Bax and his regular piano duo partner, Lucille Chung, gave recitals at New York’s Lincoln Center and were featured with the St. Louis Symphony and Stéphane Denève. He has also toured extensively with Joshua Bell and presented the complete works of Beethoven for cello and piano with cellist Paul Watkins in New York City.

Bax revisited Mozart’s K. 491 and K. 595 concertos, as heard on *Alessio Bax Plays Mozart*, for his recent debuts with the

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Boston and Melbourne Symphonies, both with Sir Andrew Davis, and with the Sydney Symphony, which he led himself from the keyboard. In addition, Bax made his solo recital debut at London's Wigmore Hall, and give concerts at L.A.'s Disney Hall, Washington's Kennedy Center, and New York's Carnegie Hall.

As a renowned chamber musician, he recently collaborated with Joshua Bell, Ian Bostridge, Lucille Chung, Steven Isserlis, Daishin Kashimoto, Sergei Nakariakov, Emmanuel Pahud, Lawrence Power, Jean-Guihen Queyras, Paul Watkins and Tabea Zimmermann.

Since 2017 he has been the Artistic Director of the Incontri in Terra di Siena Festival, a Summer Music Festival in the Val d'Orcia region of Tuscany. He appears regularly in festivals such as Seattle, Bravo Vail, Salon-de-Provence, Le Pont in Japan, Great Lakes, Verbier, Ravinia and Music@Menlo.

In 2009, he was awarded an Avery Fisher Career Grant, and four years later he received both the Andrew Wolf Chamber Music Award and the Lincoln Center Award for Emerging Artists.

Bax's celebrated Signum Classics discography includes Beethoven's "Hammerklavier" and "Moonlight" Sonatas (a Gramophone "Editor's Choice"); Beethoven's "Emperor" Concerto; Bax & Chung, a duo disc with Lucille Chung; Alessio Bax plays Mozart, recorded with London's Southbank Sinfonia; Alessio Bax:

Scriabin & Mussorgsky (named "Recording of the Month ... and quite possibly ... of the year" by MusicWeb International); Alessio Bax plays Brahms (a Gramophone "Critics' Choice"); Bach Transcribed; and Rachmaninov: Preludes & Melodies (an American Record Guide "Critics' Choice 2011"). Recorded for Warner Classics, his Baroque Reflections album was also a Gramophone "Editor's Choice." He performed Beethoven's "Hammerklavier" Sonata for Daniel Barenboim in the PBS-TV documentary Barenboim on Beethoven: Masterclass, available on DVD from EMI.

At the record age of 14, Bax graduated with top honors from the conservatory of Bari, his hometown in Italy, and after further studies in Europe, he moved to the United States in 1994. A Steinway artist, he lives in New York City with pianist Lucille Chung and their daughter, Mila. He was invited to join the piano faculty of Boston's New England Conservatory in the fall of 2019.

## **Program Notes**

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## Overture from *Le nozze di Figaro*, K. 492

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Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

### Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Overture from *Le nozze di Figaro*, K. 492

**Composer:** born January 27, 1756, Salzburg, Austria; died December 5, 1791, Vienna

**Composed:** May 28, 1786.

**Premiere:** Mozart conducted the first performance of *Figaro* at Vienna's Burgtheater on May 1, 1786.

**Duration:** 4 minutes

**Instrumentation:** 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, timpani, and strings

The best way to generate interest in something is to ban it. This holds as true today as it did in 1782, when King Louis XIV, after attending a private reading of a French comedy of manners written by Pierre Beaumarchais, declared it “detestable.” Beaumarchais’ play contained revolutionary ideas too dangerous for commoners to hear, as far as the rulers of Europe was concerned. Austria’s Emperor Joseph II agreed, and banned Beaumarchais’ play within Austria’s borders.

When Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart encountered Beaumarchais’ subversive play, he saw in it the perfect basis for an opera. With librettist Lorenzo da Ponte, Mozart relocated the story of *Figaro*, Susanna, Count Almaviva and Countess Rosina, and all their circle to Italy, and toned down the more obvious revolutionary elements.

The dizzyingly intricate plot of *Le nozze di Figaro*, Mozart’s most popular and frequently staged opera, is rife with twists, turns, reversals, misunderstandings, rumors, gossip, and deceptions. Such narrative complexity is mirrored in the Overture’s series of running notes, which generate the nonstop high energy needed to keep the story going over four acts. As was common at the time, none of the actual music in the opera appears in the Overture, but the anticipatory excitement of the music readies the audience for all the shenanigans to come.

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## Piano Concerto No.1 in B-flat minor, Op. 23

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Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky

**Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky**

*Piano Concerto No. 1 in B-flat minor, Op. 3*

**Composer:** born May 7, 1840, Kamsko-Votinsk, Vitaka province, Russia; died November 6, 1893, St. Petersburg

**Work composed:** Tchaikovsky began composing his first piano concerto in November 1874 and finished it in February, 1875. He revised it in the summer of 1879 and again in December 1888; this final revision is the one usually performed. Tchaikovsky originally dedicated the concerto to his mentor Nicolai Rubinstein, but after Rubinstein declared it unplayable, Tchaikovsky removed his mentor's name from the manuscript and dedicated it to pianist and conductor Hans von Bülow.

**World premiere:** Valter Poole led the Michigan WPA Symphony Orchestra (aka the Detroit Civic Symphony) on November 6, 1940

**Instrumentation:** solo piano, 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, timpani, and strings.

**Estimated duration:** 33 minutes

The first measures of Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No. 1 have assumed an identity all their own. Many people recognize the four-note descending horn theme and the iconic crashing chords of the pianist's first entrance without knowing the work as a whole. Interestingly, this signature introduction to the *Piano Concerto No. 1* is just that, an introduction; after approximately 100 measures it disappears and never returns. These opening bars have also become part of popular culture, as the theme to Orson Welles' Mercury Theatre radio programs; in the 1971 cult film *Harold and Maude*; and in a Monty Python sketch.

Although the rest of the concerto is equally compelling, that was not the initial opinion of Tchaikovsky's friend and mentor,

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## Tchaikovsky & Copland

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Nikolai Rubinstein. Rubinstein, director of the Moscow Conservatory, had premiered many of Tchaikovsky's works, including *Romeo and Juliet*. Tchaikovsky considered Rubinstein "the greatest pianist in Moscow," and wanted Rubinstein's help regarding the technical aspects of the solo piano part. In a letter to his patron Nadezhda von Meck, Tchaikovsky described his now-infamous meeting with Rubinstein on Christmas Eve, 1874: "I played the first movement. Not a single word, not a single comment!" After Tchaikovsky finished, as he explained to Mme. von Meck, "A torrent poured from Nikolai Gregorievich's mouth ... My concerto, it turned out, was worthless and unplayable – passages so fragmented, so clumsy, so badly written as to be beyond rescue – the music itself was bad, vulgar – only two or three pages were worth preserving – the rest must be thrown out or completely rewritten."

It is true that this concerto is awkwardly constructed in places, with some abrupt musical transitions. The writing for the soloist is often exceedingly difficult, because Tchaikovsky was not a pianist and did not possess a player's kinetic, idiomatic knowledge. However, Rubinstein's excessively negative reaction seems disproportionate.

After the majestic introduction, which anticipates the harmonic language of the following movements, the *Andante non troppo* continues with a theme Tchaikovsky borrowed from a Ukrainian folk song. Woodwinds introduce a second theme, gentler and quieter, later echoed by the piano. The movement ends with a huge cadenza featuring a display of virtuoso solo fireworks.

In the *Andantino semplice*, Tchaikovsky also features a borrowed melody, "*Il faut s'amuser, danser et rire*" (You must enjoy yourself by dancing and laughing) from the French cabaret. Tchaikovsky likely meant this tune as a wistful tribute to the soprano Désirée Artôt, with whom he had been in love a few years previously. (In another musical compliment, Tchaikovsky used the letters of her name as the opening notes of a melody from the first movement).

The galloping melody of the *Allegro con fuoco*, another Ukrainian folk song, suggests a troika of horses racing over the steppes. A rhapsodic theme in the strings recalls the lush texture of the introduction. The two melodies alternate and overlap, dancing toward a monumental coda.

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## Symphony No. 3



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—WILL SHREVE—

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Aaron Copland

## Aaron Copland

### Symphony No.3

**Composer:** born November 14, 1900, Brooklyn, NY; died December 2, 1990, North Tarrytown, NY

**Work composed:** 1944-46. Copland's Third Symphony was commissioned by the Koussevitzky Foundation and Copland dedicated it "to the memory of my good friend, Natalie Koussevitzky."

**World premiere:** Serge Koussevitzky led the Boston Symphony Orchestra on October 18, 1946.

**Instrumentation:** piccolo, 3 flutes (one doubling 2nd piccolo), 3 oboes (one doubling English horn), 2 clarinets, E-flat clarinet, bass clarinet, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 4 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, anvil, bass drum, chimes, claves, cymbals, glockenspiel, ratchet, slapstick, snare drum, suspended cymbal, tam tam, tenor drum, triangle, wood block, xylophone, celeste, piano, 2 harps, and strings.

**Estimated duration:** 38 minutes

In 1922, Nadia Boulanger, who taught composition to many of the 20th century's greatest composers, introduced conductor Serge Koussevitzky to one of her young American students. From that moment, Koussevitzky and Aaron Copland forged a reciprocal collaboration that lasted until Koussevitzky's death, in 1951. Koussevitzky championed Copland's music and taught him the nuances of conducting; in turn, Copland encouraged Koussevitzky to focus on American composers, particularly at the Berkshire Music Center (now the Tanglewood Music center), which Koussevitzky established in 1940 in Lenox, MA.

In 1944, Copland received his last commission from Koussevitzky's Foundation; this evolved into his most substantial orchestral work, the Third Symphony. Copland explained, "I knew exactly the kind of music he [Koussevitzky] enjoyed conducting and the sentiments he brought to it, and I knew the sound of his orchestra, so I had every reason to do my darndest to write a symphony in the grand manner."

In his autobiography, Copland wrote, "If I forced myself, I could invent an ideological basis for the Third Symphony. But if I did,

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I'd be bluffing – or at any rate, adding something ex post facto, something that might or might not be true but that played no role at the moment of creation.” Nonetheless, one cannot help hearing Copland's Third Symphony as the expression of a country emerging victorious from a devastating war. Copland acknowledged as much, noting that the Third Symphony “intended to reflect the euphoric spirit of the country at the time.”

Copland described the *Molto moderato* as “open and expansive.” Of particular note is the second theme, a singing melody for violas and oboes, which sounds like an inspirational moment from a film score.

The *Andantino quasi allegretto* contains the most abstract and introspective music in the symphony. High strings wander through an empty landscape, like soldiers stumbling upon a field after a bloody battle. A solo flute intones a melody that binds the rest of the movement together with, as Copland explains, “quiet singing nostalgia, then faster and heavier – almost dance-like; then more childlike and naïve, and finally more vigorous and forthright.” As the third movement's various themes weave and coalesce, sounding much like sections of Copland's ballet music, they produce a half-conscious sense of *déjà vu* – have we heard this before? Not quite, but almost, and as the third movement dissolves without pause into the final movement, we hear the woodwinds repeating a theme present in all three of the preceding sections. Now the theme shifts, the last jigsaw puzzle piece locks into place, and the *Fanfare for the Common Man* emerges.

Although the *Fanfare* is instantly recognizable today, at the time Copland was writing the Third Symphony it was little known. In 1942, Eugene Goossens, music director of the Cincinnati Symphony, commissioned Copland and eighteen other composers to write short, patriotic fanfares, for the orchestra to premiere during their 1942-43 season. Copland explained his choice of title: “It was the common man, after all, who was doing all the dirty work in the war and the army. He deserved a fanfare.”

Copland wanted a heroic finale to represent the Allied victory in WWII, and the *Fanfare* epitomized it. The flutes and clarinets introduce the basic theme, before the brasses and percussion burst forth with the version most familiar to audiences.

Reviews were enthusiastic, ranging from Koussevitzky's categorical statement that it was the finest American symphony ever written to Leonard Bernstein's declaration, “The Symphony has become an American monument, like the Washington Monument or the Lincoln Memorial.”



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Program and artists subject to change. E&OE.

## Tchaikovsky & Copland

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