Sunday, August 11, 2:30pm

THE BOSTON SYMPHONY ASSOCIATION OF VOLUNTEERS CONCERT

THOMAS ADÈS conducting

IVES
“Three Places in New England”
I. The ‘St. Gaudens’ in Boston Common
   (Col. Robert Gould Shaw and his Colored Regiment)
II. Putnam’s Camp, Redding, Connecticut
III. The Housatonic at Stockbridge

BEETHOVEN
Piano Concerto No. 4 in G, Opus 58
   Allegro moderato
   Andante con moto
   Rondo: Vivace
 INON BARNATAN
   { Intermission }

BEETHOVEN
Symphony No. 6 in F, Opus 68, “Pastoral”
   Awakening of happy feelings upon reaching the countryside. Allegro ma non troppo
   Scene at the brook. Andante molto mosso
   Cheerful gathering of the country folk. Allegro—
   Thunderstorm. Allegro—
   Shepherd’s song. Happy, grateful feelings after the storm. Allegretto

Piano by Steinway & Sons – the Artistic Choice of Tanglewood

Special thanks to Commonwealth Worldwide Executive Transportation

In consideration of the artists and those around you, please turn off all electronic equipment during the performance, including tablets, cellular phones, pagers, watch alarms, messaging devices of any kind, anything that emits an audible signal, and anything that glows. Thank you for your cooperation.

Please note that the use of audio or video recording devices, or taking pictures of the artists—whether photographs or videos—is prohibited during concerts.

NOTES ON THE PROGRAM
Charles Ives (1874-1954)
“Three Places in New England” (Orchestral Set No. 1)

First performance: January 10, 1931, Chamber Orchestra of Boston (made up of BSO members performing a reduced instrumentation), Nicolas Slonimsky cond., Town Hall, New York, the work having been composed mainly in the period 1912-17, followed by further work on the second and third movements between 1919 and 1921. First performance of the original version for large orchestra (as restored by James B. Sinclair): February 9, 1974, Yale Symphony Orchestra, John Mauceri cond. First BSO performance: February 1948, Richard Burgin cond. Only previous complete Tanglewood performance by the BSO: August 10, 2007, James Levine cond. Andris Nelsons led the BSO in “The Housatonic at Stockbridge” on August 27, 2017, preceding that summer’s season-ending performance of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony.

The premiere of Three Places in New England gave Ives the rare opportunity to hear a professional performance of one of his forty or so professional works, most of which lay mute in manuscript for decades. He attended the premiere by the Chamber Orchestra of Boston, a new-music group founded by Boston’s resident avant-gardist, Nicolas Slonimsky, who had been introduced to “the unknown composer” by their mutual friend, the like-minded modernist Henry Cowell. “The reviews were mixed,” Slonimsky later wrote. In a stroke of daring following the January 1931 premiere, Slonimsky took Three Places abroad, first to Havana that March, and then to Europe, that enterprise being financed by Ives himself. (Ives made his money as an insurance executive on Wall Street.)

In program notes for the June 1931 performance in Paris, Slonimsky distilled its essence: “géographie transcendentale par un Yankee d’un génie étrange et dense”—transcendental geography by a Yankee of strange and dense genius.” “Géographie” signifies how Ives projected a precise location for each place. “Transcendentale” implies the legacy of Emerson and Thoreau, Ives’s idols. By making his quotations of American popular music integral to his style, Ives honors their belief in the profundity of ordinary experience. “Étrange et dense” alludes to Ives’s love of dissonance and his cinematic approach to musical texture. Often, Three Places courts chaos, as Ives pans his musical landscapes with a cubist camera, juxtaposing many styles at once.

Each movement of Three Places in New England is accompanied by a poem or program explaining its title and sometimes its internal action. “The ‘St. Gaudens’ in Boston Common (Col. Shaw and his Colored Regiment)” refers to the bas-relief by the sculptor Augustus St. Gaudens. Unveiled in 1897 across from the State House, it commemorates the Massachusetts 54th—the first African-American corps in the North to fight in the Civil War, led by Col. Robert Gould Shaw. Ives responds to the momentous metamorphosis of former slaves into freedom-fighters into martyrs by depicting this “Black March”—his other name for “St. Gaudens”—as a reverent journey reworking “plantation” songs from blackface minstrelsy, particularly Stephen Foster’s “Old Black Joe,” with drumbeats depicting both the varying paces
of the marching men and the “drum-beat of the common-heart.” About six minutes in, a sudden brief military note of triumph surprises us. Is this the regiment doing battle? The trombone quotes from the 19th-century song “The Battle Cry of Freedom,” to say “The Union forever.”

“Putnam’s Camp, Redding, Connecticut” also serves Ives’s sense of patriotism.

Welding together material from two earlier pieces—Country Band March and a Overture and March, 1776 (c.1902-03)—the “plot line” for this piece centers on Israel Putnam’s stoical leadership in the winter campaign of 1778-79. “Putnam’s Camp” opens with a boisterous depiction of a Fourth of July picnic at the local state park named after the war hero. An amateur band messes up and plays out of sync. In the second section of the movement, a mysterious chord in the strings, piano, flute, and harp brings on a dream sequence: a curious child wanders into the woods. He sees a vision of the Goddess of Liberty, who pleads with mutinous cold-weary soldiers, her plaintive oboe melody insistently amplified by other woodwinds. Their defiant desertion of camp to the strains of a Revolutionary War tune, “The British Grenadiers,” is arrested only by Putnam’s timely arrival. The final section returns to the picnic and games.

In contrast to the public environment of the first two places, “The Housatonic at Stockbridge” reveals the composer’s private side. Married on June 9, 1908, to Harmony Twichell, Ives began this intimate tone poem upon returning from their Berkshire honeymoon. “We walked in the meadows along the river, and heard the distant singing from the church across the river. The mist had not entirely left the river bed, and the colors, the running water, the banks and elm trees were something that one would always remember.” His nature painting recalls the sensuousness of Debussy; the “distant singing” is depicted through borrowings from the Baptist hymn “Dorrnance,” freely altered for the main theme.

In the end, Three Places in New England transcends internal allusions and external borrowings by realizing on its own autonomous terms Ives’s goal of composing music to communicate consciousness—“not something that happens but the way something happens.” Now one of Ives’s most loved pieces, Three Places in New England speaks directly to Aaron Copland’s observation: “In listening to the music of Ives, I have sometimes puzzled over what it is that makes his work, at its best, so humanly moving.”

JUDITH TICK

Judith Tick is Matthews Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Music History at Northeastern University, and the author of Becoming Ella, a biography of Ella Fitzgerald forthcoming from W.W. Norton, Inc. Also among her books are Music in the USA: A Documentary Companion; American Women Composers Before 1870, and a biography of the composer Ruth Crawford Seeger.

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)
Piano Concerto No. 4 in G, Opus 58

During the years immediately following the composition and private first performance of the Eroica Symphony, that overwhelming breakthrough in Beethoven’s output, ideas for new compositions crowded the composer’s sketchbooks, and one important piece after another was completed in rapid succession. Normally he worked on several pieces at a time during this fruitful period and assigned opus numbers as they were completed. The Eroica (Opus 55) was composed in 1803, though final touches were probably added early in the following year. From 1804 to early 1806 Beethoven was deeply engrossed in the composition and first revision of his opera Leonore (ultimately to be known as Fidelio), but this did not prevent him from completing as well three piano sonatas (including two of the biggest and most famous, the Waldstein, Opus 53, and the Appassionata, Opus 57), the Triple Concerto (Opus 56), the Fourth Piano Concerto (Opus 58), and the Razumovsky string quartets (Opus 59). By the end of 1806 he had added the Fourth Symphony (Opus 60) and the Violin Concerto (Opus 61), and he had undertaken a good deal of work already on the piece that became the Fifth Symphony. Truly a heady outpouring of extraordinary music!

The opening of the Fourth Concerto’s first movement went through some development before achieving its very striking final form, one of the most memorable beginnings of any concerto. Rather than allowing the orchestra to have its extended say unimpeded during a lengthy ritornello, Beethoven chose to establish the presence of the soloist at once—not with brilliant self-assertion (he was to do that in his next piano concerto), but rather with gentle insinuation, singing a quiet phrase ending on a half-cadence, which requires some sort of response from the orchestra. This response—quiet, but startling in the choice of harmony—produces a moment of rich poetry that echoes in the mind through the rest of the movement.

The brief slow movement, with its strict segregation of soloist and orchestral strings (the remainder of the orchestra is silent), is so striking that it seems to demand explanation. Professor Owen Jander of Wellesley College has suggested that the movement as a whole is Beethoven’s translation into sound of the story of Orpheus and Euridice. (Vienna at that time was enjoying a sudden spurt of interest in Ovid’s Metamorphoses, one of the principal classical sources of the Orpheus legend, which had long been popular with composers given its demonstration of the power of music over even the forces of death.)

The second movement ends in E minor. Beethoven establishes a direct link to the third movement—and a wonderful musical surprise—by retaining two of the notes of the E minor triad (E and G) and reharmonizing them as part of a chord of C major. Thus the rondo theme of the last movement always seems to begin in the “wrong” key, since by the end of the phrase it
has worked its way around to the home key of G. This gives Beethoven special opportunities for witty musical sleight-of-hand, since his returns to the rondo theme throughout the movement will come through harmonic preparation not of the home G, but of the “off-key” beginning of C. This movement, too, is spacious and rich in ideas, many of them developed from four tiny melodic and rhythmic figures contained in the rondo theme itself. Most of the movement rushes along at a great pace, though there is a smooth and relaxed second theme by way of contrast. Soon after this has been recapitulated, Beethoven offers a rich and rare moment of unusual (for him) orchestral color: under a continuing delicate spray of notes high up in the piano, the divided violas play a smoothed-out, almost rhythmless version of the main theme; it comes as such a surprise that they are almost through before we recognize what is happening. But this same smooth version of the crisp rondo theme recurs in the enormous coda, first in bassoon and clarinets, then—most wonderfully—in a canon between the piano’s left hand and the bassoons and clarinets, before the final full orchestral statement of the theme brings the concerto to its brilliant close with some last prankish echoes.

STEVEN LEDBETTER

Steven Ledbetter was program annotator of the Boston Symphony Orchestra from 1979 to 1998.

Ludwig van Beethoven
Symphony No. 6 in F, Opus 68, “Pastoral”


Beethoven took delight in the world of nature. When in Vienna he never failed to take his daily walk around the ramparts, and during his summers spent outside of town he would be outdoors most of the day. The notion of treating the natural world in music seems to have occurred to him as early as 1803, when he wrote down in one of his sketchbooks a musical fragment in 12/8 time (the same meter used in the Pastoral’s “Scene at the brook”) with a note: “The more water, the deeper the tone.” Other musical ideas later to end up in the Sixth Symphony appear in Beethoven’s sketchbooks sporadically in 1804. During the winter of 1806-07, he worked out much of the thematic material for all the movements but the second. In the fall of 1807 and the spring of 1808 he concentrated seriously on the work and apparently finished it by summer 1808, since he reached an agreement that September 14 with the publisher Breitkopf & Härtel for the sale of this symphony with four other major works.

One thing that aroused extended discussion of the new symphony—a discussion that lasted for decades—was the fact that Beethoven provided each movement of the work with a program, or literary guide to its meaning. His titles are little more than brief images, just enough to suggest a specific setting:
I. Awakening of happy feelings upon reaching the countryside.

II. Scene at the brook.

III. Cheerful gathering of the country folk.

IV. Thunderstorm.

V. Shepherd’s song. Happy, grateful feelings after the storm.

But much more important for an understanding of Beethoven’s view is the overall heading that Beethoven had printed in the program for the first performance: “Pastoral Symphony, more an expression of feeling than a painting.” Even given the birdcalls of the second movement, the thunderstorm of the fourth, and the *ranz des vaches* (Swiss herdsman’s song) borrowed by Beethoven to introduce the final movement’s “hymn of thanksgiving,” he never intended that this work be considered an attempt to represent events in the real world, an objective narrative in musical guise. Rather, this symphony provided yet again what all of his symphonies had offered: subjective moods and impressions captured in harmony, melody, color, and the structured passage of time. Ultimately, all those elements that might be labeled “programmatic” can be seen to nestle snugly and fittingly into what the eminent critic and annotator Donald Francis Tovey has called “a perfect classical symphony.”

Beethoven’s sketchbooks also reveal that he was working on his Fifth and Sixth symphonies at the same time. They were finished virtually together, given consecutive opus numbers (67 and 68), and premiered in the same concert (where they were reversed in numbering, with the *Pastoral*, given first on the program, identified as “Symphony No. 5”). Further, only twice in Beethoven’s symphonic writing—that is, in these two symphonies—did Beethoven link the movements of a symphony so they would be performed without a break. In the Fifth Symphony, the scherzo is connected to the finale by an extended, harmonically tense passage that demands resolution in the bright C major of the closing movement. Much the same thing happens in the *Pastoral* Symphony, although the level of tension is not nearly so high, and the linking passage has grown to a full movement in and of itself (the thunderstorm), resulting in Beethoven’s only five-movement symphony.

Yet no two symphonies are less likely to be confused, even by the most casual listener—the Fifth, with its demonic energy, tense harmonies, and powerful dramatic climaxes on the one hand, and the Sixth, with its smiling and sunny air of relaxation and joy on the other. Nothing shows more clearly the range of Beethoven’s work than these two masterpieces, twins in their gestation, but hardly identical. Popular biographies of Beethoven tend to emphasize the heaven-storming, heroic works of the middle period—the *Eroica* and Fifth symphonies, the *Egmont* Overture, the *Emperor* Concerto, the *Razumovsky* string quartets, the *Waldstein* and *Appassionata* sonatas—at the expense of other aspects of his art. On the other hand, some critics of a “neoclassical” orientation claim to find the even-numbered symphonies to be more successful than the overtly dramatic works. Both views are equally one-sided and give a blinkered representation of Beethoven. His art embraces both elements and much more.
Thomas Adès, CBE

Now in his third year as the BSO’s Deborah and Philip Edmundson Artistic Partner, a position recently extended through the BSO’s 2020-21 season, composer-conductor-pianist Thomas Adès was born in London in 1971. Renowned as both a composer and performer, he works regularly with the world’s leading orchestras, opera companies, and festivals, and was made a CBE in the 2018 Queen’s Birthday Honours. Mr. Adès’s most recent opera, The Exterminating Angel, premiered at the 2016 Salzburg Festival and has also been performed at the Metropolitan Opera and at London’s Royal Opera House. His opera The Tempest was commissioned by and first performed at the Royal Opera House in 2004, with a new production at the Metropolitan Opera in 2012. Orchestral commissions include those from the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Berlin Philharmonic, Carnegie Hall, the New World Symphony, Berliner Festspiele, BBC Proms, Los Angeles Philharmonic, London’s Royal Festival Hall, and the Boston Symphony Orchestra. As the BSO’s artistic partner he leads the orchestra in Boston and at Tanglewood, performs chamber music with the Boston Symphony Chamber Players, and directs the Festival of Contemporary Music at Tanglewood. As a conductor, he appears regularly with the Los Angeles, New York, and London philharmonic orchestras, the Boston, London, BBC, City of Birmingham, Melbourne, and Sydney symphony orchestras, and the Royal Concertgebouworkest in Amsterdam. In the 2018-19 season he led the Orchestre de Paris, Britten Sinfonia, and Leipzig Gewandhausorchester. Recent piano engagements include solo recitals at Carnegie Hall and London’s Wigmore Hall and concerto appearances with the Boston Symphony and New York Philharmonic. This season included a solo Janáček program in London, Paris, Lisbon, and the Czech Republic, Schubert’s Winterreise at Wigmore Hall with Ian Bostridge, and duo-recitals with Kirill Gerstein at Carnegie Hall and Boston’s Jordan Hall.

Mr. Adès’s honors include the Grawemeyer Award for Asyla (1999) and the British Composer Award for The Four Quarters. The recording of his second opera, The Tempest, won a Gramophone award; the DVD of the Metropolitan Opera’s production was awarded the Diapason d’Or de l’année, Best Opera Grammy Award, and ECHO Klassik Music DVD Recording of the Year. The Exterminating Angel won the World Premiere of the Year at the International Opera Awards. In 2015 Mr. Adès was awarded the prestigious Léonie Sonning Music Prize. Thomas Adès made his BSO conducting debut in March 2011, subsequently returning for further subscription concerts on several occasions, most recently in March 2019, when he led the world premiere of his BSO-commissioned Concerto for Piano and Orchestra with soloist Kirill Gerstein, as well as works by Liszt and Tchaikovsky. He made his first
Tanglewood appearances in July 2017, conducting the BSO and also appearing as pianist in a Schubert program with baritone Andrè Schuen and members of the Emerson String Quartet. His most recent Tanglewood appearance with the BSO was last summer, conducting a July 2018 program of Adès and Sibelius.

Inon Barnatan

Making his Boston Symphony Orchestra and Tanglewood debuts this afternoon, pianist Inon Barnatan is the recipient of both the Avery Fisher Career Grant (2009) and Lincoln Center’s 2015 Martin E. Segal Award. Mr. Barnatan is the new music director of the La Jolla Music Society Summerfest, this year being his first in the role. A regular soloist with many of the world’s foremost orchestras and conductors, the Israeli pianist recently served three seasons as the inaugural artist-in-association of the New York Philharmonic. This season he plays Beethoven with Hamburg’s Elbphilharmonie Orchestra led by Alan Gilbert, Mozart with the Australian Chamber Orchestra in New York’s Alice Tully Hall, and Rachmaninoff with the Pittsburgh Symphony and Israel Philharmonic, also led by Alan Gilbert. In recent seasons he has made debuts at the BBC Proms, with the London and Helsinki philharmonic orchestras, and with the Chicago, Baltimore, Fort Worth, Indianapolis, Nashville, San Diego, and Seattle symphony orchestras. Also a sought-after chamber musician, he collaborates this season with the Dover, Calidore, and St. Lawrence string quartets, performing with the latter at Carnegie Hall, and tours the U.S. and Europe with his frequent collaborator, cellist Alisa Weilerstein, along with violinist Sergey Khachatryan and percussionist Colin Currie. He appeared with the Boston Symphony Chamber Players in April 2011. Mr. Barnatan makes his recital debut in the International Piano Series at London’s Southbank Centre and plays additional recitals at the Seattle Symphony’s Benaroya Hall and for the Celebrity Series in Boston, where he has appeared in various chamber configurations since 2008. His passion for contemporary music has seen him commission and perform many works by living composers, including premieres of pieces by Thomas Adès, Sebastian Currier, Avner Dorman, Alan Fletcher, Joseph Hallman, Alasdair Nicolson, Andrew Norman, and Matthias Pintscher. Mr. Barnatan’s critically acclaimed discography includes Avie and Bridge recordings of Schubert’s solo piano works, as well as “Darknesse Visible,” which scored a place on the “Best of 2012” New York Times list. His most recent release is a live recording of Messiaen’s ninety-minute masterpiece Des Canyons aux étoiles, in which he played the formidable solo piano part at the Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival. His 2015 Decca Classics release, “Rachmaninov & Chopin: Cello Sonatas” with Alisa Weilerstein, earned rave reviews on both sides of the Atlantic.