Welcome

Our all-Beethoven season closer features an overture less often performed. The Overture to King Stephen is from incidental music written for a play by Kotzebue and commissioned in 1811 for the opening of a new theater in Budapest. The play celebrated the founding of Hungary in the year 1000 by King Stephen I. From the royal key of E flat, to its relative minor, we welcome back John O’Conor following his superb performance in 2016, to perform Beethoven’s third Piano Concerto in C minor. Our symphonic journey continues with his most famous of works, the Symphony No. 5 in C minor, ending victoriously in C major.

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Andrew Sewell
Music Director

Tonight’s Program

Andrew Sewell, conductor
John O’Conor, piano

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

Overture to King Stephen, op. 117 (1811) [8]

Piano Concerto No. 3 in C minor, op. 37 (1800) [34]
  Allegro con brio
  Largo
  Rondo: Allegro
  John O’Conor, Piano

INTERMISSION

Symphony No. 5 in C minor, op. 67 (1807-08) [31]
  Allegro con brio
  Andante con moto
  Allegro—
  Allegro

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This project is supported in part by a grant from the Wisconsin Arts Board with funds from the State of Wisconsin and the National Endowment for the Arts.
Andrew Sewell, Music Director

Andrew Sewell celebrates his eighteenth season as Music Director of the Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra. During his tenure Maestro Sewell has raised the orchestra to new artistic heights, expanded the repertoire and provided innovative and adventuresome programming to all their concert programs. True to its name, the Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra performs to an annual audience of 200,000 statewide, serving many communities and diverse audiences. His previous appointments include Music Director with the Wichita Symphony from 2000 – 2010, Mansfield Symphony (OH) 1997- 2002, and resident conductor of the Toledo Symphony from 1995 – 2000. In 2017 Maestro Sewell was appointed music director of the San Luis Obispo Symphony on California’s central coast. He serves in this position concurrently with the Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra while residing in Madison.

Maestro Sewell is in demand as a conductor having led the Toronto, Detroit, Milwaukee, Columbus, Syracuse, and Monterey Symphony Orchestras, as well as the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, Auckland Philharmonia, Christchurch Symphony, Dunedin Sinfonia, National Symphony of Mexico, Kyushu Symphony (Japan), and City Chamber Orchestra of Hong Kong.

A native of New Zealand, Maestro Sewell received his music training on the violin, piano and cornet, and began conducting at age 16. Six years later, he made his professional opera debut with the Mercury Opera and the Auckland Philharmonia Orchestra. Winning the Australian Guarantee Corporation’s Young Achiever’s Award in 1987 allowed him to further his studies abroad. Sewell holds a Master of Music degree with Honors in Conducting from the University of Michigan.

Maestro Sewell maintains an active guest conducting schedule including in recent seasons, the City Chamber Orchestra of Hong Kong, Illinois Symphony, San Luis Obispo Symphony, Toledo Symphony, Detroit Symphony, Auckland Philharmonia, Gulf Coast Symphony, Portland-Columbia Symphony, Eugene Symphony, Salem Chamber Orchestra, Oshkosh Symphony, Springfield (OH) Symphony, the OK Mozart Festival, Peninsula Festival (WI) and Masterworks Festivals in Indiana, Ohio and South Carolina.

He was awarded the 2017 Musician of the Year Award by the Association of Wisconsin Symphony Orchestras, and in 2013 was honored with the Marvin Rabin Arts Youth Award for Individual Achievement by the Wisconsin Youth Symphony. He and his wife, Mary have three grown children and reside in Madison.
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In 1808, as part of rebuilding the Hungarian capital after the Turkish war and occupation, Emperor Francis I of Austria commissioned the construction of a large theatre in Pest. The German Theater boasted a room for dancing and other entertainment, a casino, a restaurant, and a coffee-house. Three years later, in order to encourage solidarity between Hungarians and the Austrian Hapsburg monarchy, the theater’s inaugural gala included a tribute to the founder of the Hungarian state in the form of *King Stephen*, a Prologue with chorus, and an epilogue called *The Ruins of Athens* by playwright August von Kotzebue. Beethoven’s accompanying music, the *Overture to King Stephen*, has strong Hungarian accents running through two dances, a stately Hungarian rhapsody, and a lively final dance.

The first performance of his *Piano Concerto No. 3 in C minor* was pure Beethoven. The occasion was a big all-Beethoven concert in 1803. The only full rehearsal lasted all day and frazzled the performers so much that some pieces planned for the concert had to be dropped. Ignaz von Seyfried, who turned the pages for Beethoven’s performance of the piano concerto, reported that entire pages were all but blank and that the undaunted composer improvised his way through much of it. Beethoven denied a Viennese newspaper’s accusation that he had doubled the ticket prices, but the receipts from the concert enabled him to live comfortably for two years.

In 1804 Beethoven’s patron Count Franz von Oppersdorf wanted a symphony with a finale that included a piccolo, three trombones, and three kettledrums, instruments that Beethoven had never used in a symphony. The composer informed the Count that the finished product had “though not three kettledrums, more noise than six kettledrums and indeed better noise at that.” Another innovation was the short bridge from the third to the fourth movement.

The Napoleonic wars, the occupation of Vienna by French troops, and increasing deafness all contributed to the tumultuous circumstances under which Ludwig van Beethoven wrote his *Symphony No. 5 in C minor*. C minor was Beethoven’s chosen key for expressing the stormy and heroic. The famous four-note motif that begins the symphony and recurs in it has been variously—and probably erroneously—said to represent “fate knocking at the door” or the song of a bird called the yellow-hammer.

After just one rehearsal the symphony was first performed—badly—on December 22, 1808, at the Theater an der Wien during a cold four-hour all-Beethoven extravaganza that also included the Sixth Symphony, the Choral Fantasy, the Fourth Piano Concerto, the concert aria “Ah Perfido!” and parts of the *Mass in C*. Composer Johann Friedrich Reichardt reported being swathed in cloaks and furs and freezing in a box near the stage with Prince Lobkovitz as Beethoven conducted the muddled, error-prone orchestra.
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JOHN O’CONOR BIOGRAPHY

A pianist of unbounding sensitivity” (Gramophone); “He represents a vanishing tradition that favors inner expression and atmosphere over showmanship and bravura” (Chicago Tribune); “Impeccable technique and musicality … it would be hard to imagine better performances” (Sunday Times – London); “This artist has the kind of flawless touch that makes an audience gasp” (Washington Post); “Exquisite playing” (New York Times).

The Irish pianist John O’Conor has been gathering wonderful reviews for his masterly playing for over forty years. Having studied in his native Dublin, in Vienna with Dieter Weber and been tutored by the legendary Wilhelm Kempff his unanimous 1st Prize at the International Beethoven Piano Competition in Vienna in 1973 opened the door to a career that has brought him all around the world.

He has performed with many of the world’s leading orchestras including the London Symphony, Royal Philharmonic, Czech Philharmonic, Vienna Symphony, l’Orchestre National de France, the NHK Orchestra in Japan and the Atlanta, Cleveland, San Francisco, Dallas, Montreal and Detroit Symphonies in North America. He has given concerts in many of the world’s most famous halls including Carnegie Hall and the Lincoln Center in New York, the Kennedy Center in Washington, the Wigmore Hall and South Bank Centre in London, the Musikverein in Vienna, the Dvorak Hall in Prague, the Seoul Arts Centre, and the Bunka Kaikan in Tokyo. He enjoys collaborating in Lieder recitals and performing chamber music with many instrumentalists and ensembles such as the Cleveland, Tokyo, Vanbrugh, Vermeer, Takacs, Vogler and Ying Quartets.

John O’Conor first gained widespread attention in the USA in 1986 with the release of his first volume of Beethoven Sonatas on the Telarc label. He went on to record the complete Sonatas and these were issued as a box set in 1994. CD Review described Mr. O’Conor’s performances as “recordings of the highest calibre and Beethoven playing at its best”. Mr. O’Conor has made more than 20 recordings for Telarc, including the complete Beethoven Bagatelles (cited by the New York Times as the best recordings of these works) and Mozart Concertos with Sir Charles Mackerras and the Scottish Chamber Orchestra. He has also recorded the complete Nocturnes, Sonatas and Concertos of the Irish Composer John Field.

In 2007 and 2008 he recorded the complete Piano Concertos of Beethoven with the London Symphony Orchestra conducted by Andreas Delfs and these have been greeted with great acclaim. In the past year he has released two new CDs on the Steinway label, one of Beethoven’s Diabelli Variations and the other of five Haydn Sonatas.

Prof. O’Conor is regarded as one of the most important piano teachers in the world today. He is Distinguished Artist in Residence, Professor of Music and Chair of the Piano Division at Shenandoah Conservatory in Virginia, Professor of Piano at the Glenn Gould School of the Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto, International Visiting Artist at the Royal Irish Academy of Music and Visiting Professor at Showa University in Japan. His students have won many international prizes and he is in great demand for masterclasses and as a juror at the most prestigious International Piano Competitions worldwide.

“For his services to music he has been awarded Honorary Doctorates by the National University of Ireland, by Trinity College Dublin, by the Dublin Institute of Technology and by Shenandoah University, the title “Officier de l’Ordre des Arts et des Lettres” by the French Government, the “Ehrenkreuz für Wissenschaft und Kunst” by the Austrian Government, the Order of the Rising Sun by the Emperor of Japan, and has received many other awards. In 2015 he was made an Honorary Life Member of the Royal Dublin Society.

John O’Conor is a Steinway Artist.
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The Partners Program of the Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra is a premier donor club that celebrates the partnering of major individual donors and the Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra's world class musicians. We'd like to take this opportunity to thank our Partners for sponsoring these fine musicians.

The winner of the 2018 Young Artist Concerto Competition is cellist Matthew Udry, performing Cello Concerto No. 1, Mvts. 3 & 4 by Dmitri Shostakovich. Runner-up was tubist Noah Laabs performing Vaughn Williams' Concerto for Bass Tuba, Mvts. 1 & 2.

The Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra Young Artist Concerto Competition gives gifted high school students from around the state the opportunity to showcase their talents with Music Director Andrew Sewell and the musicians of the WCO. The competition is open to students in grades 9-12 residing in the state of Wisconsin. We accept applications from piano, string, woodwind, brass, and percussion players.

As winner of the 2018 Young Artist Concerto Competition, Matthew will appear as a soloist at the Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra's June 27, 2018 Concerts on the Square, and will receive the David Lewis Crosby Scholarship in the amount of $1,000.

The runner-up, tubist Noah Laabs will receive a scholarship in the amount of $500. For more information contact the Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra office at 257-0638.
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Mom and dad gave us the gift of
music. Happy birthday, Jane!
Kathryn Woodson
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