

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)  
German composer and pianist  
Born 1770, Bonn, Germany  
Died 1827, Vienna, Austria

### *Overture to Egmont, Op.84*

This Overture was the first work performed at the debut of the BPO in 1935; most recently performed on 1996 October 6, 1996, conducted by Maximiano Valdes; duration: 9 minutes

With the downbeat of this wonderful *Overture*, the Buffalo Philharmonic marks the beginning of its 75th anniversary - true to the mission of the Orchestra's founders: "To bring great music to the citizens of Buffalo and Western New York." Simple enough. How it has all played out is a fascinating story of ideals and dreams, determination and dedication, hard work and perseverance - all for the love of music.

And how fitting that Beethoven's *Egmont Overture* was selected as the first work to be performed, marking the long-term, lofty aspiration of the community at large for an orchestra of its very own. Opening night was on November 7, 1935 at Buffalo's Elmwood Music Hall, with maestro Lajos Shuk on the podium as the Orchestra's first music director. The program continued with the music of Brahms, Debussy and Glière.

Perhaps no figure in 19th century music was more influential than Ludwig van Beethoven - whose Romantic pen was fired by spiritual nobility and reverence for the common man. However, apart from his celebrity as a pianist and composer, the composer's personal life was complicated. For example, he had repeatedly suffered the rebuke of unrequited love from women who could not or would not accept the complexities of his personality. Added to this was the reality of his progressive hearing loss, an affliction he resented bitterly but one which did not deter the passion of his altruistic philosophy.

While Beethoven's full catalog is a trove of variety in all major genres, his most endearing musical statements reveal the heart of an idealist. Among them are his opera *Fidelio* (in praise of a heroic woman), the *Eroica* symphony (dedicated to any great individual), the ninth symphony (**Ode to Joy** by Schiller), and the *Prometheus* ballet (hero of Greek legend), among others.

Likewise, Beethoven's *Egmont Overture* glorifies the intrepid hero portrayed in Goethe's verse-drama of 1777. The play calls for incidental music at various points along the way, including a "symphonic victory" in the last scene. For a revival of the drama at Vienna's Burgtheater in 1810, Beethoven completed eight selections plus an overture. He wrote to the poet's friend Bettina von Bretano: "I have written the music out of love for Herr Goethe's poems, which bring me much happiness. Who can be thankful enough for a great poet, a nation's richest jewel?"

Set in the Netherlands in 1568, the story is based in part on fact:

Prince Egmont is sentenced to death for leading a rebellion against Spanish occupation. On the eve of his execution the ghost of Clärchen (who was both his earthly love and the Goddess of Freedom) appears to Egmont in a dream. To the populace a defiant Egmont proclaims:

*The deepest joys of my heart were one; divine freedom inhabited the figure of my dearest love. Strive forth, brave people! Friends, take heart! Your parents, your wives, your children are behind you. Guard your sacred heritage. And defend all you hold most dear, as I do before you now!*

Opening in solemn F minor, an ominous mood is initially tone-painted via plaintive lyrics in the woodwinds over dark commands in the strings. But in turns, as the tempo brightens, the music becomes ever more resolute, spinning into a fully symphonic treatment. Beethoven, ever the optimist, captures the spirit of Egmont by transposing doubtful hope into defiant joy, closing with imperious, heralding brass and a stellar, "symphonic victory" in brazen F major. Magnificent.

Sergey Prokofiev  
Russian composer  
Born April 23, 1891, Sontsovka, Ukraine;  
Died March 5, 1953, Moscow

### ***Cinderella***

*Introduction*  
*The Stepsisters*  
*Dancing Lesson and Gavotte*  
*The Fairy*  
*Cinderella Arrives at the Ball*  
*Cinderella's Waltz*  
*Midnight*  
*The Prince finds Cinderella (Amoroso)*  
*Waltz Reprise*

First Classics performance: October 29, 1977, conducted by Sarah Caldwell; most recent performance: April 2, 1994, conducted by Arie Lipsky; duration 36 minutes

An old maxim from the world of ballet is that 'music tells a story, dancers tell the music.' And while the ballet repertoire is replete with glorious offerings, especially from about 1840, doubtless the heritage from Bolshoi and Kirov in Russia has set the bar/barre high. The great Rudolf Nureyev once remarked: "In the world of story ballet, the Father, Son and Spirit are Tchaikovsky, Stravinsky and Prokofiev."

Despite the success of his ballet ***Romeo and Juliet*** in 1935, Prokofiev waited until 1944 to complete ***Cinderella***, written in part as a diversion from World War II. The score is dedicated to Tchaikovsky. Both works are brilliant masterpieces of ballet theater, highlighted by Prokofiev's ability to convert the elements of a simple storyline directly into scene music. The composer had a unique style and a gift to blend evocative tunes over insinuating harmonies.

Versions of the Cinderella story have existed around the globe for more than a millennium, the first recorded in China in the ninth century. About his own rendering of the tale, Prokofiev noted:

"I see Cinderella not only as a fairy tale character, but as a real person, feeling, experiencing, and moving among us. The work is conceived as a classical ballet with variations, adagios, pas de deux, etc.

"The main thing I wanted to convey in the music of *Cinderella* was the poetic love of Cinderella and the Prince - the inception and flowering of the emotion, the obstacles in its way, the realization of the dream.

"A major role in my work on *Cinderella* was played by the fairy-tale nature of the subject, which faced me as a composer with a number of interesting problems - the mysteriousness of the good grandmother fairy, the fantasy of the twelve dwarfs leaping at midnight from the clock and beating out a tap-dance reminding Cinderella to return home, the swift alternation of the countries of the world visited by the prince in search of Cinderella, the vivid and poetic breath or nature in the figures of the four fairies of the seasons of the year and their attendants. But the authors of the ballet wanted the onlooker to see living and feeling people in this fairy-tale setting on stage. Thus, my librettist Volkov and I devoted a great deal of attention to the dramatic side of the ballet.

"Besides the dramatic structure of *Cinderella*, it was very important to me that the ballet should be most danceable, that the dances should flow from the design of the plot, and that the dancers should have the opportunity to display their interpretive art to the fullest."

Following the great success of *Cinderella*, in 1946 Prokofiev derived three orchestral suites for the concert hall (as he had done earlier with *Romeo and Juliet*). Music director JoAnn Falletta has derived the current set from each of the suites. Indeed: 'music tells the story.'

*Introduction* - the sad-sweet principal theme for Cinderella reveals Prokofiev's gift for tuneful and harmonic intrigue. No doubt about it, this is love-scene music in advance, despite the poignant tone setting.

*The Stepsisters* play with an embroidered shawl, which ultimately gets torn in half. In traditional productions of the ballet, each of the stepsisters is portrayed by a long-retired male danseur - a delightful farce.

In *Dancing Lesson*, the awkward stepsisters stumble and fumble to learn a few steps.

*The Fairy* portrays Cinderella's fairy godmother, who arrives just in time to set the stage for love.

*Cinderella Arrives at the Ball* is framed in a sumptuous orchestral setting.

In *Cinderella's Waltz*, she and the Prince become enthralled by love, but at the stroke of *Midnight*, Cinderella must flee from the palace to avoid discovery.

After *The Prince finds Cinderella* (also known as the *Amoroso*), the fabled lovers are united at last.

The final *Waltz* recalls their first meeting and represents happiness everafter.

Peter Ilich Tchaikovsky  
Russian composer  
Born April 25, 1840, Votkinsk

Died October 25, 1893, St. Petersburg

***Concerto for Violin in D Major, Op.35***

*Allegro moderato*

*Canzonetta: Andante*

*Finale: Allegro vivacissimo*

First performed on the BPO Classics series on November 5, 1936, with soloist Mischa Elman, conducted by Lajos Shuk; most recently performed on June 3, 2007, with violinist Elmar Oliveira, conducted by JoAnn Falletta; duration 33 minutes

Composed under the arc of the Romantic Age, Tchaikovsky's ***Concerto for Violin*** of 1878 is one of the most popular instrumental works of all time. Part of its allure must be credited to the composer's melodic gift, with florid harmonies and a ballet-master's feel for rhythm and balance.

Oddly, the new concerto was initially criticized in high places. It was feared the pyrotechnical demands on the soloist would overshadow the otherwise lyrical spirit of the work.

Today we are baffled at such an account, in that Tchaikovsky had written splendidly for the solo violin in his ballet ***Swan Lake***, and in particular in his ***Symphony No.4***, and in his opera ***Eugene Onegin***, both completed in 1878, along with the concerto. Clearly, the composer was at the top of his game, and knew full well what the violin could do in capable and willing hands.

Fortunately, the work was defended and taken up by the Russian Violinist Adolf Brodsky, who scheduled the new concerto at leading concert venues across Europe, believing the public would ensure the work's future. Brodsky was right - the concerto was received with great enthusiasm in all quarters. Tchaikovsky expressed his appreciation by honoring Brodsky with the score's dedication.

But in addition to the charm of the work overall - lovely tunes, lyrical virtuosity and zesty Russian rhythms - a deeply personal statement resides within. It is as if the ***Violin Concerto*** has a poetic undertow, a code of emotional nuance that defines every phrase, vacillating from joy to sadness on the fly. And so it goes, now probing, now singing, now weeping, now dancing - a musical narrative shaded like the scenarios of Lord Gordon Byron (whose verse was deeply admired by Tchaikovsky):

*And her voice was the warble of a bird,  
So soft, so sweet, so delicately clear,  
That finer, simpler music ne'er was heard;  
The sort of sound we echo with a tear,  
Without knowing why - an overpowering tone,  
Whence Melody descends as from a throne.*

— Lord Byron

Surely, it was an emotive leap of this kind which flowed from Tchaikovsky's pen. But isn't this just Romantic speculation? Well, consider the record: It was immediately after his disastrous marriage of just two months that the composer traveled to Florence, Paris, Vienna, and finally, to Clarens, Switzerland (at Lake Geneva), where he settled down enough to score the new concerto, as one might write a personal memoir. Moreover, listeners often discern a catharsis here, especially in the first two movements, which are among the loveliest plaints in all of music. But

heart-cares are surely wind-swept by the up-beat and playful virtuosity of the third movement, *Allegro vivacissimo*. The spectacular role for the soloist is to challenge the orchestra in a whirligig symphonic chase. Splendid fun.

Program Notes by Edward Yadzinski