

UC San Diego Chamber Orchestra

March 12, 2024 – 8:00 p.m.

Mandeville Auditorium

Overture to "Egmont"

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

Symphony No. 3

- i. Allegro con brio
- ii. Andante
- iii. Poco allegretto
- iv. Allegro

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

Matthew Henson - conductor

The concert will last approximately 50 minutes and will be performed without an intermission.

Audience members are reminded to please silence all phones and noise-generating devices before the performance. As a matter of courtesy and copyright law, no unauthorized recording or photography is allowed in the hall.

UC San Diego is a non-smoking campus.



UC San Diego

SCHOOL OF ARTS AND HUMANITIES
Department of Music

Performers

Violin I

Abraham Blanquel
Ariana Moore
Emily Chen
Emmett Pangan
Griffin Harper
Kritin Karkare
Lewis Weng
Linnea Trotman
Raymond Li
Ryan Jeffers
Sydney Liao
U Lam Lou

Violin II

Aaron Truong
Ambal Kailasam
Austin Haggard
Colton Long
Daniel Chen
Edward Gill
James Harriman
Manasvini Komandur
Seoin
Victor Wu
Yi Fu

Viola

Alexi Alexiou
Andre Qin
Ariel Anchanattu
Juliana Tran
Justin Chen
Kay Pivonka
Kayla Mitchiner
Kendall Fultz-Waters
Mana Khalvati

Cello

Benjamin Kramer
David Bittleman
Huiying Huang
Irene Chen
Leander Goessling
Minhnha Kawamura
Rebecca Kirby
Ruth-Mary Shackelford

Double Bass

Angelica Pruitt
Helen Fluetsch
Jesus Leon
Nicholas Marko
Paul Grantham

Flute

Aretha Li
Keene Cheung
Sabrina Wang
Vivian Liu

Oboe

Jacob Butler
McKenna Eve Carlson

Clarinet

Cindy Cao
Janice Meltser
Randy Lew
Sara Kenney

Bassoon

Dan Weiss
Helena Ellis do Amaral

Contrabassoon

David Savage

Horn

Eli D'Amico
Elsa Kim
Ethan Han
Jasmine Rodriguez

Trumpet

Eric Lin
Hugo Ingelsson

Trombone

Chase Accornero
Shane Kim
Thomas Allen

Timpani

Blark (Runfa) Lee

Program Notes

Beethoven's *Overture to "Egmont"* -- composed as part of a ten-movement incidental music work to accompany Goethe's play of the same title -- insightfully foreshadows the play's full narrative in this opening number. The story is that of Lamoral, Count of Egmont, a 16th-century Dutch general who refuses to give up his fight against Spanish oppression, despite the inevitability that he is fighting a losing battle. Ultimately, he is imprisoned and beheaded. Beethoven's overture opens this narrative with a slow 3/2 to invoke the weight of the Spanish oppression. However, this gives way to a persistent *Allegro* as the Count begins his fight for freedom. The melodies of the *Allegro*, though, carry a foreboding air, as his defeat is imminent. Ultimately, the melodic movement is cut short, as he is beheaded, and a short song of lament is played for him. But his death is ultimately not in vain, as he died a martyr for the eventual Dutch independence. Thus, Beethoven ends the overture with a song of victory, not of mourning.

Though Goethe's play was written before Napoleon declared himself emperor of France in 1804, Beethoven contributed his incidental music in 1810 as a direct admonition of Napoleon's abuse of his power. Beethoven had previously dedicated his *Eroica* symphony to Napoleon in 1803, but removed his name from the dedication as he grew to resent his oppressive authority. Correspondingly, *Egmont* became an effort to uplift those victim to Napoleon's tyranny.

Brahms's *Symphony No. 3*, on the other hand, does not have narrative musical intentions, but is rather an exploration of the material of music, itself. Brahms, thanks to his notorious sense of self-doubt, shied away from the Classical symphonic form early in his career as a composer. Reverent to the titans of the genre who came before him, he viewed himself as unworthy to contribute to the tradition saying, "You have no idea what it's like to hear the footsteps of a giant like that behind you," (as translated in Larry Rothe's program notes on this work for the San Francisco Symphony) referring specifically to Beethoven. However, Brahms did eventually try his hand at the genre, ultimately composing four symphonies which are definitively canonized alongside those of the greats who preceded him.

Within this context, the third symphony proves curious to me, as the piece -- though showing an evident indebtedness to its forebearers -- approaches the symphonic form with a rich depth of forward thought. Brahms's reverence to symphonic tradition is clear within the work, perhaps most evidently in its motivic material. The work's opening melody bears strong resemblance to that of the third symphony of Robert Schumann, Brahms's primary composition mentor, both in rhythmic and tonal profiles. Returning to Beethoven, the piece also contains several references to the famous four note figure which opens Beethoven's fifth symphony. However, the piece contains several technical differentiations from symphonies of the past. First, the work's four movements are ripe with motivic unity which crosses their divisions. The reference to Beethoven's fifth symphony, for example, sounds with clarity in all movements, except for perhaps the third, developed in its appearance with each iteration. Furthest to the foreground, though, the opening melody -- repeated often within the first movement, itself -- returns in the piece's final bars. This idea is, of course, not fully unprecedented, seen, for example, with the opening fanfare of Tchaikovsky's fourth symphony returning before the fourth movement's climactic finale. In the case of Brahms's opening melody, though, the theme first appears as a bold and propulsive assertion, returning at the work's conclusion as a dissolving whisper, offering the interpretative possibility of the entire work as the exploration and transformation of a single musical idea. The piece's harmonic development, the second unique progression on the symphonic form, furthers this interpretive possibility. The piece's four movements are in F Major, C major, c minor, and f minor, respectively. That the outer movements of a symphony would be in the same or parallel keys is to be expected. However, the movement from a major key to its parallel minor is a reversal of harmonic expectation. Traditionally, a symphony with a minor outer movement would have it as the first. But it is the inner movements which provide the most harmonic intrigue in Brahms's scheme. Typically, the harmonic relation of a symphony's inner movements would be by relative or subdominant key to the first movement (particularly if one were attempting to emulate Beethoven). However, in the case of Brahms's third symphony, both inner movements are in the first's dominant key. With this, Brahms crafts the piece's overall harmonic structure as one large-scale cadential movement around F, thus centering the work largely on the development and transformation of a single idea.

I originally constructed this program to provide the orchestra with an opportunity to perform rigorous and selections which would highlight the high levels of musical force and energy we share amongst us. Certainly, as you will hear, this goal has been realized, as the orchestra performs the works with passion and abandon to highlight the immensity of their musical characters. Through the quarter, though, I have also found a strong and unintentional sense of musical unity between these works. Both works richly propel themselves through rhythmic subversions of their notated meters, while their collective tonal layout creates a full arc. Specifically, the *Overture to "Egmont"* precedes the aforementioned tonal construction of Brahms's *Symphony No. 3* with a linear transition from f minor to F major, giving not only Brahms work, but the concert as a whole, a singular tonal focus. As the throughlines of this large-scale construction meld with the ensemble's musical dedication, this program -- concise though it is -- packs an immense punch of musical intrigue.

~Matthew Henson