

WAIKATO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

BEETHOVEN

Sat. Oct. 30th 8:00pm
Te Anauville
Sun. Oct. 31st 2:30pm
Founders Theatre

Adults \$5
Students } \$2.50
Senior Citizens }
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CONCERT

Conductor: A. Buchanan-Smart

EGMONT OVERTURE

SYMPHONY No 1

PIANO CONCERTO
No 4

(soloist:
Cecile
McShane)



HAMILTON ARTS FESTIVAL

Ludwig van Beethoven

Born: Bonn 1770
Died: Vienna 1827

"Egmont" Overture

During the 2nd occupation of Vienna by Napoleon's army, the censorship on books and plays was relaxed to a certain extent. Two plays which had previously been banned because of their radical content now became publically available - these were Schiller's "William Tell", and Goethe's "Egmont". According to Czerny, Beethoven was more anxious to write incidental music for "William Tell", but he was given the task to compose the incidental music for "Egmont" - a play supposed to be less adaptable to music. Beethoven could not have minded having to do this play rather than Schiller's, for he idolised the poet, Goethe, and the subject matter of Egmont must have appealed irresistibly to Beethoven's passionate love of liberty and hatred of tyranny and oppression. The story deals with the Spanish oppression of the Netherlands in the 16th Century and the revolution which led to the liberation of the Low Countries. The Count Egmont resists this oppression in the form of the Duke of Alba. Despite his efforts to mediate between the Duke of his own country and the Duke, he is arrested and executed. But his spirit lived on with his people.

In all, Beethoven completed 10 pieces for the play by 1810, including the famous Overture performed here. For a play supposedly less adaptable to the medium, Beethoven produced some masterly music. The overture is one of the most dramatic theatrical preludes in all music; it is also a masterpiece of formal compression. The gigantic F minor chords at the opening set a dark, sombre tone. This leads to an Allegro of astonishing inner force and passion depicting the, as yet submerged struggle of an oppressed people against a brutal tyrant. The music basically treats this struggle as a battle between good and evil. As the music sweeps up to a huge climax, the brass ring out in a sinister fanfare, suggesting that evil and oppression have triumphed and with a vicious downward 4th, the violins graphically depict the execution of Count Egmont. But the brilliant Coda following makes it quite plain that liberty will overcome as it sweeps forward to light and triumph.

With Leonora No. 3, this Egmont Overture is, both as a concert piece and a dramatic prelude, the supreme example of Beethoven's gift of concentrating the living essence of drama into a single, all embracing orchestral tone-poem.

The soloist: Cecilie McShane

Cecilie was born in Melbourne, and graduated with honours from the Melba conservatorium and was later on the staff. She has toured for CAE Victoria and in 1970-71 she studied in Europe. In 1979 Cecilie gained a QEII Arts Council award to study in Australia with the noted English pianist Trevor Barnard. Now resident in Hamilton she works as a teacher, soloist, accompanist and broadcaster, and is known for her recital tours with American violinist Jack Glatzer and N.Z. mezzo soprano Anthea Moller.

This performance of Beethoven's 4th Piano Concerto is a reunion between Cecilie and the Waikato Symphony - two years ago she performed Beethoven's 3rd Piano Concerto with this Orchestra. We hope this association will continue in the future.

Piano Concerto No. 4 in G Major, Op. 58.

Allegro moderato.
Andante con moto.
Rondo (Vivace).

The fact Beethoven suffered from deafness is well documented, so much so that it is easy to overlook the terrible anguish and psychological trauma this must have presented to a musician. That Beethoven continued to compose at all is almost as remarkable as the quality of his achievements. Following 1800 as he realised that his deafness was an increasing and permanent affliction, he began to compose with furious speed, bringing forth a veritable flood of masterpieces. The 2nd, 3rd (Eroica) and 4th Symphonies, the Opera Fidelio, Op. 53 & 54 Piano Sonatas (including The Moonlight, Kreutzer and Appassionata), three Rasoumovsky Quartets and this Piano Concerto No. 4 were all completed before 1807.

By 1804 it was becoming an effort for friends to converse with him. Following 1808, deafness forced Beethoven's retirement as a public performer—he, the greatest piano virtuoso of the age. His last concert appearance, in Vienna on a cold winter's day in December 1808, was a notable one. Two of his Symphonies, the Choral Fantasia, extracts from the Mass in C, a Fantasia which Beethoven improvised himself and the first performance of the 4th Piano Concerto, a work which amazed the large audience.

This amazement began with the very first note of the Concerto when Beethoven, the soloist, lifted his hands and gave out the main theme himself. It was an unheard-of innovation. (Traditionally, a concerto had commenced with a long passage for orchestra stating the various themes which the soloist was later to elaborate). Then after the simple statement of this single theme by the piano, came the second surprise with the orchestra entering on a completely unexpected chord before returning gently to the original key. There is an extended development with repeated use of the rhythm of the opening theme and brilliant passage work for the piano. The movement rounds itself off spectacularly with a return to the rhythm of the opening theme.

The second movement has no parallel in the whole literature of concertos, an eloquence which is so powerful that it comes near to speech. It is almost literally a dialogue between piano and strings, the strings beginning abrupt and stern, the piano with a brief melody of haunting beauty. Gradually this changes, the bass harshness and staccato nature of the string passages melt into a soft harmony, as the piano triumphs over this harshness and austerity. But the triumph is not complete, for the piano ends on a note of inconsolable grief, while the strings fade into breathless pianissimo.

The 3rd and final movement opens with another touch of Beethovenian humour, for the first theme is introduced in the "wrong" key and then swings unexpectedly into the "right" one. There is a intriguingly halting rhythm in the piano's sprightly answer to this theme. The movement has only one other theme, a charming melody introduced high up on the piano against a sustained note on the cellos. The main theme makes a last appearance, presto, and the opening rhythm is hammered out by the full orchestra in a swift and brilliant conclusion.

— INTERVAL —

Symphony No. 1 in C Major, Op. 21.

Adagio molto—Allegro con brio.

Andante cantabile con moto.

Menuetto.

Adagio—Allegro molto & vivace.

Beethoven's first symphony was received with considerable criticism, mainly on account of the free treatment of the wind instruments and its mixed tonality. As it opens, expectation sits high—the lack of a sure harmonic base tantalising the ear, the tricky wind and pizzicato string chords teasing and testing out orchestral ensemble. After some (for the day) unusual modulations, we settle into the home key and 1st theme Allegro. The gait is unmistakably Beethoven's—taut and alert. While the development is brief, it is elaborate, and the movement ends with a coda of considerable length.

The second movement starts with a graceful theme which is treated in the style of a fugue, but before this playful contrapuntal treatment has proceeded very far a second theme in the dominant key and first heard on the strings, introduces an atmosphere of tenderness.

Although marked menuetto in the score, the third movement might equally well have been called a scherzo. As at the beginning of the work, the modulations are bold and unexpected. The lithness and capriciousness of the menuetto are interrupted by the more delicate charm of a trio in which chords in the wind and scale passages on the violins predominate.

The Adagio opening of the finale is only six bars in length. It begins with a long held G in the full orchestra and then the violins experiment, as it were, with scale passages preparatory to soaring upwards at the beginning of the allegro. A later theme is syncopated which adds to the sheer joy of the movement. In fact it is reminiscent of one of the rustic dances which Haydn used so frequently in his final rondos. The symphony ends with the persistent repetition of the tonic chord.

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