

UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH
ORCHESTRAL CONCERTS

Season 1949-50

SIXTH CONCERT: March 9th at 7.30 p.m.

at the Reid School of Music.

Conductor: Dr. John Fairbairn
Leader of Orchestra: Peter McKinley

SOLOISTS

PAULINE ALLEN (Soprano) JAMES REID (Baritone)

THE UNIVERSITY SINGERS

PROGRAMME

1. Symphony No. 4 in C minor "Tragic" Schubert
2. Incidental music to Goethe's "Egmont" Beethoven

The part of Egmont in the final scene is spoken by Mr. T. Wilson Morgan. For notes on the drama and Beethoven's music to it, see below.

-----INTERVAL-----

3. Dona Nobis Pacem - Cantata for soprano and baritone soli, chorus and orchestra Vaughan-Williams.
- For details see overleaf.

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Note on Goethe's "Egmont".

Goethe was 26 years old when, in the very last weeks before leaving his native Frankfort for Weimar, he began his drama Egmont. Like various other longer works undertaken in the storm and stress years, including Faust, Egmont remained a fragment when Goethe moved to the new sphere of life which was to alienate him from his impetuous and irresponsible youthful self, and eventually to make of him an adherent and exponent of classical restraint and humanistic self-discipline. It would appear that not much more than the last act of Egmont still remained to be written when Goethe arrived at Weimar in 1775, but his various attempts to complete the drama during the next 11 years proved abortive, and it was not until 1787 that he at last succeeded in the task. The first four acts bear the character of wilful, untamed youth - in them Goethe was for the last time imitating Shakespeare, a model he later came to regard as dangerous. The fifth act, however, is very much less concrete and vivid than its predecessors, deserting the real world for an idealistic and visionary sphere; and it is significant that it is only in this last act that he expressly summons the musician to his aid.

The historical Count Egmont, who was executed in 1567, at the age of 46, was, with his family of many children, a somewhat more prosaic figure than what Goethe made out of him. He became one of the many figures from the past into whom the youthful poet read his own unbridled individualism, his own sense of genius and a unique destiny. Goethe shows Egmont helping to administer the Netherlands.

Netherlands, in the name of the King of Spain, but sympathising with the agitations of the citizens for political freedom and even with their Protestantism, using his power to shelter them from the King's wrath and confident that he can secure for them in the teeth of official opposition whatever is legitimate in their aspirations. In this confidence he proved mistaken -- he is no politician he has no due sense of facts, no realisation of the ruthlessness and treachery true politicians are capable of. His more realistic and worldly-wise associate, William of Orange, warns him of his danger in vain -- unsuspecting and headstrong, Egmont walks into the trap, is arrested by the Duke of Alba, who comes armed with a royal commission to stamp out all disaffection towards Spain and Catholicism with fire and the sword, and is condemned to death. But the very excessive confidence in himself and in the more generous and noble elements in human life which make Egmont a mere child in public affairs, constitutes his greatness, his beauty and heroic fascination -- and inwardly he remains unconquered to the last, when he is led from his prison to the scaffold. One must be as cruel, calculating and base as Alba, not to yield to this magic of Egmont's heroic personality -- in everybody else with whom he comes in contact he inspires love and devotion, in Margaret, the King of Spain's regent, in his fellow councillors, but above all in the common people of the Netherlands. This adoration of the common people for Egmont is personified especially in Clärchen, the simple girl of humble origins, who has completely given herself up to Egmont in love. On this lawless love between the reckless aristocrat and the girl of the people there fall none of those shadows which darken the love of Faust and Gretchen. Clärchen's devotion rises buoyant above all cares of religious conscience, of what the neighbours might say, or of what might eventually become of her; only the actual danger of Egmont can affect her, and when she learns that he must die, she poisons herself. It is to indicate her death that the first musical interlude is called for by the stage directions. Again in the final scene Goethe has directed that music shall accompany the vision which appears to Egmont when he has lain down to sleep, unperturbed, only a short while before his execution. Herein the spirit of Freedom appears to him as one and the same thing as Clärchen, holding out before him the laurel wreath and the emblems of victory and foreshowing the eventual liberation of the Provinces. At the final curtain, when he is conducted out to the scaffold, the last stage directions call for a "symphony of victory" from the orchestra, to conclude the play.

BEETHOVEN'S MUSIC TO 'EGMONT'

The music which Beethoven composed to this drama in 1810 (the production for which it was intended appears to be unknown) goes appreciably further than these three indications given by the author in the stage directions already mentioned. The two songs of Clärchen, which Goethe probably intended to be sung quite simply 'in character' without orchestral accompaniment (and in the first of which Clärchen's ineffectual would-be lover Breckenburg is encouraged to 'sing a good second' to her) are set by Beethoven so substantially and vividly that they quite transcend their immediate context. The four entractes all either briefly forestall or exactly coincide with the fall of the curtain. In all but the second of them the curtain has risen again on the next act before the music ceases. If indeed Beethoven envisaged any interval at all in the performance it can only have been at the conclusion of the second entracte. The overture is perfectly embodies the idealism, tragedy and alternate moral victory of the drama, as does the Leonora III overture the essence of Fidelio. But incorporating as it does the 'symphony of victory' which concludes the drama, it must inevitably detract to some extent from that final scene, if not deprivation of the /

the whole substance and span of the play.

One can understand precisely what Goethe meant when he wrote to Marianne von Willemer in July 1821: "Beethoven has performed wonders here, and it was a happy thought to commentate the music for Egmont with brief interpolations, so that it can be rendered as an oratorio." This must surely refer to a performance not of the play, but of the music, rendered intelligible in its sequences and dramatically significant by the interpolation of a spoken commentary, possibly with the inclusion of some brief excerpts from the text of the play.

Clärchen's Song(from the last scene of Act I)

Breckenburg, her would-be lover, whose love she had once returned can hardly bring himself to stand face to face with her to hold the yarn she is winding. Her mother, who would gladly see Clärchen comfortably married to a man not above her own station, and mindful of their former happiness together, calls for a song. 'Hark to the sound of the pipe and the drum - my love is a soldier - Oh! that I as a man could march with him to the wars!' It is an old theme, but it shows in a flash the passion with which she worships her hero Egmont.

Clärchen cannot bring herself to dismiss Breckenburg but does not hesitate to request whatever help she may require of him. He, finding his position intolerable, is half-resolved to end his life.

Entracte I closes his melancholy and despondent reflections. Then the character of the music changes to introduce the stir and lively excitement of the crowd in the market-place at Brussels, confused with political gossip and rumours of risings, and incited by agitators, until the appearance of Egmont restores order.

Entracte II follows the scene in which Orange attempts to convince Egmont of the danger he is courting. When Orange has left him, Egmont confesses himself moved by his solicitude, but undeterred.

Clärchen's Song

Impatiently pacing her room, Clärchen hums the refrain of the song, whilst her mother still speaks to her of Breckenburg. Her only answer is to sing this song of love's pain and rapturous joy.

A moment or two later Egmont is with her. He has come dressed in all the finery of his court apparel and honours.

Entracte III closes this scene, echoing and re-echoing the refrain of Clärchen's rapturous song. The sudden intrusion of a March ever increasing in its formidable strength, indicates the coming of Alba and of martial law in the Provinces. The shadow of fear and suppression which this law immediately casts upon all those who once thronged the market-place, is already apparent in the conclusion of this entracte.

Entracte IV

Alba has trapped Egmont at a meeting at the palace. Summoned in the king's name, to yield up his sword, Egmont exclaims 'The king?' Orange! Orange!' (and after a pause) 'Take it!! It has been employed far oftener in defending the cause of my king than in protecting this breast!' Upon these words the music follows immediately.

The change of character to an "andante agitato" follows the next scene. In the twilight, Clärchen, agitated, confused, half in despair and yet unshaken in her idealism and her faith that the common people will rise to save their hero, goes about the street /

street calling upon one and another passer-by for help, until Breckenburg persuades her that it is of no avail.

Back in her room at night, she learns from Breckenburg that the scaffold is being prepared against the dawn. Secretly she poisons herself and with a few words to him, leaving him to do as he will, she goes to her last sleep. For him neither life nor death holds any consolation. In utter anguish he departs, forgetting to extinguish the lamp as she had bidden him.

As the music sounds, the scene remains unchanged. Only the lamp burns on until the flame flickers and dies out.

Melodrama (words spoken to a background of music)

Egmont in his cell having found in himself perfect composure, and harmony of spirit, lies down to sleep.

In a vision, Freedom appears to him in celestial glory. Her features are those of Clärchen. She looks upon him with compassion. Then showing him the symbols of freedom and victory, she signifies that his death will secure the freedom of the Provinces and hails him as a conqueror.

The music ceases as the vision fades. Already an ominous drum proclaim that his hour has come. Egmont awakes in ecstasy, his thoughts cling to the vision he has seen. Resolute, fearless, compassionate for his guards who are but the instruments of tyranny, he goes to his death; and as the curtain falls, the 'symphony of victory' rings out in triumph.

C A N T A T A
DONA NOBIS PACEM

I

Agnus Dei qui tollis peccata mundi
Dona nobis pacem.

II.

Beat! beat! drums! -- blow! bugles! blow!
Through the windows - through the doors - burst like a ruthless force
Into the solemn church, and scatter the congregation,
Into the school where the scholar is studying;
Leave not the bridegroom quiet - no happiness must he have now
with his bride,
Nor the peaceful farmer any peace, ploughing his field, or
gathering in his grain
So fierce you whirr and pound you drums - so shrill you bugles
blow.

Beat! beat! drums! - blow! bugles! blow!
Over the traffic of cities - over the rumble of wheels in the
streets;
Are beds prepared for the sleepers at night in the houses? No
No sleepers must sleep in those beds,
No bargainers' bargain by day - would they continue?
Would the talkers be talking? would the singers attempt to sing?
Then rattle quicker, heavier drums - you bugles wilder blow.

Beat! beat! drums! - blow! bugles! blow!
Make no parley - stop for no expostulation,
Mind not the timid - mind not the weeper or prayer,
Mind not the old man beseeching the young man,
Let not the child's voice be heard, nor the mother's entreaties,
Make even the trestles to shake the dead where they lie awaiting
the hearses,
So strong you thump O terrible drums - so loud you bugles blow.

(Walt Whitman)

III.

RECONCILIATION

Word over all, beautiful as the sky,
Beautiful that war and all its deeds of carnage must in time be
utterly lost,
That the hands of the sisters Death and Night incessantly, softly,
wash again and ever again this soiled world;
For my enemy is dead, a man divine as myself is dead,
I look where he lies white-faced and still in the coffin - I
draw near,
Bend down and touch lightly with my lips the white face in the
coffin.

(Walt Whitman)

IV.

DIRGE FOR TWO VETERANS.

The last sunbeam
Lightly falls from the finished Sabbath,
On the pavement here, and there beyond it is looking
Down a new-made double grave.

Lo, the moon ascending,
Up from the east the silvery round moon,
Beautiful over the house-tops, ghastly, phantom moon,
Immense and silent moon.

Over

I see a sad procession
 And I hear the sound of coming full-keyed bugles,
 All the channels of the city streets they're flooding
 As with voices and with tears.

I hear the great drums pounding,
 And the small drums steady whirring,
 And every blow of the great convulsive drums
 Strikes me through and through.

For the son is brought with the father,
 In the foremost ranks of the fierce assault they fell,
 Two veterans, son and father, dropped together,
 And the double grave awaits them.

Now nearer blow the bugles,
 And the drums strike more convulsive,
 And the daylight o'er the pavement quite has faded,
 And the strong dead-march enwraps me.

In the eastern sky up-buoying,
 The sorrowful vast phantom moves illumined,
 'Tis some mother's large transparent face,
 In heaven brighter growing.

O strong dead-march you please me!
 O moon immense with your silvery face you soothe me!
 O my soldiers twain! O my veterans passing to burial!
 What I have I also give you.

The moon gives you light,
 And the bugles and the drums give you music,
 And my heart, O my soldiers, my veterans,
 My heart gives you love.

(Walt Whitman)

V.

The Angel of Death has been abroad throughout the land; you may almost hear the beating of his wings. There is no one as of old to sprinkle with blood the lintel and the two side-posts of our doors so that he may spare and pass on. (John Bright)

Dona nobis pacem.

We looked for peace, but no good came; and for a time of health, and behold trouble! The snorting of his horses was heard from Dan; the whole herd trembled at the sound of the neighing of his strong ones; for they are come and have devoured the herd and those that dwell therein

The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved Is there no balm in Gilead? is there no physician there? Why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?

Jeremiah viii, 15-22.

'O man greatly beloved, fear not, peace be unto thee, be strong, yea, be strong'

Daniel x, 19.

'The glory of this latter house shall be greater than that of the former and in this place will I give peace'

Haggai ii, 9.

VI.

'Nation /

see over.

VI.

'Nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they have war any more. And none shall make them afraid, neither shall the sword go through their land. Mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other. Truth shall spring out of the earth, and righteousness shall look down from heaven. Open to me the gates of righteousness, I will go into them.

Let all the nations be gathered together, and let the people be assembled, and let them hear, and say, it is the truth. And it shall come, that I will gather all nations and tongues. And they shall come and see my glory. And I will set a sign among them, and they shall declare my glory among the nations. For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, so shall your seed and your name remain for ever.'

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men.

(Compiled from the Old Testament)

Dona nobis pacem