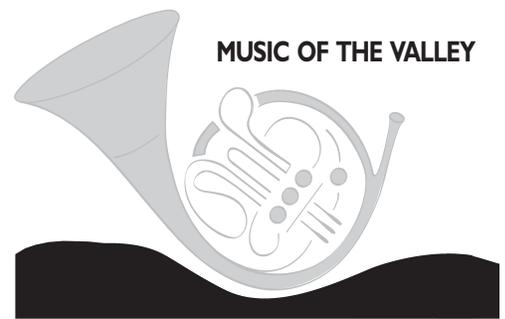


# Livermore-Amador Symphony

Arthur P. Barnes, Music Director & Conductor

December 4, 2010, 8 p.m.

Bankhead Theater, Livermore



## Three Cheers for Beethoven!

### Overture to *Egmont*, Opus 84

Sostenuto, ma non troppo – Allegro

Ludwig van Beethoven  
(1770–1827)

### Concerto for Violin, Cello, and Piano (Triple Concerto), Opus 56

Allegro  
Largo (attaca)  
Rondo alla polacca

Ludwig van Beethoven

Anthony Doheny, violin  
Stephen Harrison, cello  
Marilyn Thompson, piano

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### INTERMISSION

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### Symphony No. 5 in C Minor, Opus 67

Allegro con brio  
Andante con moto  
Scherzo: Allegro  
Allegro

Ludwig van Beethoven

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#### CONDUCTOR

Arthur P. Barnes

#### ASSISTANT CONDUCTOR

Bob Williams

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Jo Ann Cox  
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Nancy Ly\*  
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\* Livermore High School student and winner of a scholarship from the LAS youth outreach program

## Overture to *Egmont* Opus 84

Ludwig van Beethoven  
(1770–1827)

Beethoven received several commissions for music to accompany theatrical presentations. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, the celebrated author of *Faust*, completed his play *Egmont* in 1778. He specified that it be accompanied by music and even indicated precisely where he wished it to be heard. Several composers took up the challenge prior to Beethoven, but none succeeded.

In 1809 the directors of Vienna's Burgtheater shrewdly approached Beethoven, whose catalog of works by that time included six symphonies and the opera *Fidelio*, to provide music for a revival of *Egmont*. He accepted the offer eagerly, Goethe being one of his favorite writers.

His score included nine pieces—entr'actes, songs, melodramas (music heard under speech)—and an overture. The introductory music was the last to be finished—too late, in fact, for the revival's first performance. Uncharacteristically, Beethoven refused payment, presumably out of reverence for Goethe. The author experienced the play with Beethoven's music for the first time in 1814. He expressed enthusiastic approval, especially for the final scene. "Beethoven has followed my intentions with admirable genius," he said.

The play is set in Brussels during the sixteenth century, when the Netherlands lay under Spanish occupation. The local resistance leader, Count Egmont, is imprisoned and condemned to death. His grief-stricken wife takes her own life. The night before Egmont's execution, she appears to him in a dream, transformed into the goddess of freedom. She foretells that his death will inspire his countrymen first to rebellion and then to the reestablishment of their liberty. Heartened by this vision, Egmont is able to face his execution with dignity. Beethoven's *Egmont* Overture transcends its specific inspiration to make a stirring, uplifting statement on human affairs.

The solemn opening chords, in the key of F minor, forecast the ominous events to come. The theme is written in the form of a sarabande, a Spanish dance, perhaps indicating the menacing role the antagonist, the Duke of Alba, will play.

After some lyric development, a melodic phrase gains momentum before transforming into the main section, introduced by the cellos in a sweeping downward phrase. This theme builds to an orchestral climax, after which, having reprised the main themes, the orchestra stops dead. Out of this pause, a new vibrancy asserts itself, growing in intensity into an explosion of joyous, victorious power.

## Concerto for Violin, Cello, and Piano (Triple Concerto), Opus 56

Beethoven

The works Beethoven was writing in the early years of the nineteenth century were turning the music world upside down. His third symphony (the *Eroica*), the third and fourth piano concertos, the *Waldstein* and *Appassionata* sonatas,

and the three *Razumovsky* string quartets are all towering monuments of Romantic music. Beethoven wrote them all within the space of about five years, and they all redefined the meaning of symphony, piano concerto, sonata, and string quartet. In the middle of that time span, just as he was finishing the *Eroica* Symphony, Beethoven started writing another type of concerto. It featured not one solo instrument but three. Compositions for multiple solo instruments were common. During Bach's time, a piece involving several soloists accompanied by an orchestra was called a *concerto grosso*. In Mozart's day, it was called a *sinfonia concertante*. Yet again Beethoven seemed to want to stretch the limits of an established form. His Triple Concerto really is more of a melding of the intimacy of chamber music—he wrote many piano trios for piano, violin, and cello—with the grandeur of an orchestral work. Typically for Beethoven, he also presented himself with problems of balance and form that he then set about solving within the concerto.

Although the Triple Concerto has the standard three movements, with the standard tempi—fast, slow, fast—it begins in an unusual way. The cellos and basses play the primary melody with hushed expectancy. After the quiet opening, the rest of the orchestra finally finds its way in and presents the various themes of the first movement in a more straightforward style. After this long exposition, the solo trio enters one by one, starting with the cello. Each gets a chance at all of the themes. The orchestra serves only as the barest background, with an interjection here and there. An extensive development section deals primarily with the main theme, and then there is a restatement of everything from the beginning. Curiously missing from this first movement is any sort of cadenza. In typical concertos of Beethoven's time, the cadenza was a freely improvised section for the soloist, without the orchestra, near the end of a movement. Improvisation was an important aspect of the age, but group improvisation would have to wait another hundred years for the arrival of jazz. So, for the Triple Concerto, Beethoven simply supplies a long solo trio section.

The second movement is a beautiful, lyrical, short movement in which the cello gets most of the attention. It leads almost imperceptibly into the third movement. It is a rondo (where a main theme alternates with several contrasting themes) based on a polacca—originally a stately Polish dance in triple time.

Concertos with multiple soloists began to fade from the musical scene after Beethoven; not many other triple concertos have been successful. The reason may be a change in musical tastes. More probably, Beethoven had extended another form to its very limits and other composers simply could not follow.

## Symphony No. 5 in C Minor Opus 67

Beethoven

In his landmark study *The Classical Style*, Charles Rosen observed that Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, like Mozart's

D minor piano concerto, is almost as much myth as work of art. “When listening to it,” he writes, “it is difficult at times to say whether we are hearing the work or its reputation.” That reputation developed almost immediately; it is not anything that subsequent generations had to reassess and discover. As early as 1810, the eminent critic E. T. A. Hoffmann reviewed the Fifth Symphony in the *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung*, an important Viennese musical newspaper.

*This particular symphony, more than any other of his works, unfolds Beethoven’s Romantic spirit in a climax rising straight to the end and carries the listener away irresistibly into the wondrous world of the infinite. ... The whole work storms past some people like an ingenious rhapsody; but the soul of every sensitive listener will surely be deeply and intimately seized right up to the final chord by an enduring feeling which is exactly that inexpressible prophetic longing. ... It is conceived with genius, carried out with profound thoughtfulness, and expresses in the highest degree the Romantic spirit in music.*

Hoffmann’s review places a territorial claim on Beethoven as the embodiment of musical Romanticism. The Romantic idealism of his description is partly responsible for the idea of heroic struggle that has become associated with this legendary symphony.

Tradition has assigned to the Fifth Symphony the musical metaphor of artist as hero. Pitted against an unsympathetic society, he emerges triumphant after a victory over internal strife. Hoffmann was one of the earliest critics to explore the remarkable programmatic potential in this pregnant music, but the composer himself planted the seeds for the ensuing harvest of rhetoric. Beethoven’s amanuensis Anton Schindler (whose character had such a key role in Bernard Rose’s 1994 film *Immortal Beloved*) reported that Beethoven pointed to the beginning of the first movement and expressed in these words the fundamental idea of his work: “Thus Fate knocks at the door!”

Strengthening that idea is the tonality of C minor, which has been called both the “key of fate” and the “heroic key” in Beethoven’s music. There is no question that certain tonalities carried deep significance for Beethoven. Several other works in C minor share the terse drama of the Fifth Symphony. The *Pathétique* Sonata, opus 13 (1798/99), and the Third Piano Concerto, opus 37 (1800), are early examples. His *Coriolan* Overture, opus 62 (1807), is another C minor work contemporary with the Fifth Symphony.

From a musical standpoint, the overriding characteristic that unifies the Fifth Symphony is its military flavor. March rhythms figure prominently, sometimes even when the music is in triple time, as in the C major sections of the slow movement. Beethoven’s emphasis on the brass section underscores the martial quality of the symphony. So too does his expansion of the orchestra to include piccolo (redolent of military band flavor) and trombones for the finale. His letter

to his patron Count Franz von Oppersdorff in March 1808 shows that he wanted the bigger sound.

*The last movement of the symphony has three trombones and flautino (piccolo)—and not three timpani, but will make more noise than six timpani, and better noise than that.*

Only the beginning of the scherzo, with its spooky, menacing lower strings outlining the opening arpeggios, eludes the military overtones. Beethoven’s allusion to “better noise” makes one wonder whether there is an undertone of glee in his close. He takes a whopping fifty-four measures to hammer home the final C major cadence, just to make certain we get his message. Nearly two centuries later, the rhetoric retains its power undiminished.

*Program notes compiled by Jeff Pelletier*

*Program booklet edited by Eva Langfeldt*

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## **ANTHONY DOHENY**

### **Violin Soloist**

Anthony Doheny thrilled the LAS audience in May 2009, performing the Violin Concerto No. 2 by Max Bruch. Born in Australia, Dr. Doheny earned a doctorate from Stanford University and has taught violin and viola at Stanford, the Sydney Conservatorium, University of Melbourne, and Monash University. Dr. Doheny is also a composer; he released a CD of his works for viola and piano, *Soul of the Viola*, in 2004.

## **STEPHEN HARRISON**

### **Cello Soloist**

Stephen Harrison is a former principal cellist of the Opera Company of Boston, the New England Chamber Orchestra, and the Chamber Symphony of San Francisco. He has toured internationally and recorded on the Delos, CRI, and other labels. Mr. Harrison was born in San Francisco, once dreamed of playing lead guitar in a rock band, and has taught at Stanford since 1983.

## **MARILYN THOMPSON**

### **Piano Soloist**

Pianist Marilyn Thompson has performed the concerti of Mozart, Beethoven, Brahms, and Gershwin, and in December 2009 joined LAS for a triumphant performance of Rachmaninoff’s Piano Concerto No. 3. Ms. Thompson has played at Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, and Boston’s Symphony Hall and is chamber music director and piano teacher at Sonoma State University.

**NEXT CONCERT**  
**FEBRUARY 12, 2011—YOUTH SOLOISTS, *TELL, AND TILL***

Rossini: *William Tell* Overture  
 Khachaturian: Masquerade Suite  
 Chabrier: España, Rhapsody for Orchestra  
 Strauss: Till Eulenspiegel

*plus solos by winners of the  
 2010–2011 Competition for Young Musicians:*



————— Da Eun Kim  
 will perform as the soloist  
 in the 1st movement of  
 Violin Concerto No. 2  
 by Wieniawski

Anna Lorenz —————  
 will perform as the harp soloist  
 in *Dances Sacrée et Profane*  
 by Debussy



**TRIPLE CONCERTO QUILTED WALL HANGING**

The Livermore-Amador Symphony Guild will hold a drawing in the foyer after tonight's concert for a lovely quilted wall hanging. This 3-by-4-foot wall hanging with the theme "Triple Concerto" was designed, created, and quilted by Mary Rizzo especially for this Guild fundraiser. Tickets are \$1 each or 6 for \$5; on sale since September, they will be available at intermission and briefly after the concert.



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