



**GRAND VALLEY
STATE UNIVERSITY[®]**

**DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC,
THEATRE, AND DANCE**

University Symphony Orchestra

Dr. Joel Schut, conductor

7:30 P.M.

Wednesday, October 14, 2026

Louis Armstrong Theatre

Haas Center for Performing Arts

GVSU Valley Campus

Program

Egmont Overture (1810)

Ludwig Van Beethoven
(1770-1827)

Horn Concerto No. 1 in Eb Major, Op. 11 (1883)

Richard Struass
(1864-1949)

Allegro
Andante
Allegro

Rebecca Salo, horn

Intermission

Night on Bald Mountain (1867/1886)

Modest Mussorgsky
(1839-1881)
Arr. Rimsky-Korsakov

Suite No. 1 from "The Maypole Lovers"

Rossetter Gleason Cole
(1866-1952)

Prelude and Finale (Act I)
Roger's Monologue (Act I)
Dance (Act II)

Program Notes

Beethoven – Egmont Overture

A famous painting by Carl Rohling painted in 1887 was titled “The Incident at Teplitz”, capturing the famous meeting between Goethe and Beethoven on July 21, 1812 in that city. Beethoven, wearing his hat, is in the foreground moving away from Goethe, who is bowing to royalty with hat removed. Twenty-one years separated the two men, and but far more than two decades separated their political positions. “Goethe delights in the court atmosphere far more than is becoming to a poet,” Beethoven stated to his publishers, Breitkopf and Hartel. At the time, Beethoven explained, “I waited for you [Goethe] because I respect you and admire your work, but you have shown too much esteem to those people...” For Goethe, Privy Counsellor at the Weimar Court, it was absolutely correct to show deference and respect.

The meeting at Teplitz was the first time the two men had met in person, primarily to go over music Beethoven had composed for a re-staging of his play “Egmont in Weimar.” In 1822, reminiscing with the critic Friedrich Rochlitz, Beethoven remembered, “How patient the great man was with me...how happy he made me then! I would have gone to death, yes ten times to death for Goethe. Goethe... he lives and wants us all to live with him. It is for that reason that he can be composed.” The admiration was not mutual. Goethe, in a letter to the critic Carl Zelter, noted that Beethoven “had an absolutely uncontrolled personality, he is not altogether wrong in holding the world detestable, but surely he does not make it more enjoyable for himself or others by his attitude.” He grudgingly admitted, however, that, “Beethoven has done wonders matching music to the text.”

In the past, Goethe had often found Beethoven’s music to be “overblown and incomprehensible.” How then, did Beethoven receive a commission for this project? In fact, the commission came from Joseph Hartl, manager of the Court Theaters in Vienna, who wanted to bring plays by Goethe and Schiller to the theatre. Beethoven was enthusiastic; the topic aligned perfectly with the composer’s morality, sensibilities and political views.

On April 12, 1811, Beethoven wrote to the poet, “I am in a position to approach you only with the deepest reverence...You will shortly receive from Breitkopf and Hartel [for which he received 1,400 gulden] the music to Egmont... I should like to know your opinion...” (information derived from Chicago Symphony Orchestra program notes, 1921–22). Hence, the face-to-face meeting in Teplitz came naturally in the course of musical decisions. Goethe’s play with Beethoven’s nine incidental pieces and Overture was fully staged in 1814 but critical response was bleak. Only the Overture took off in the musical world after its premiere, and the incidental pieces were performed at the Hofburg Theatre on May 24, 1810. Beethoven had written the music in 1809. The play, originally penned by Goethe in 1787, eventually sank into obscurity.

For Beethoven, this composition was a chance to provide a musical counterfoil to the contemporary Napoleonic juggernaut. Count Egmont deserved to be remembered for his fighting for human freedom (against Spanish Oppression), and it was time to highlight the relevancy of his martyrdom. His Overture chronicles the sixteenth century story of Lamoral, Count Egmont of the Netherlands who defied a Spanish attack captained by the Duke of Alva.

The Overture opens with a long-held, heavy, F minor chord (Egmont in prison) followed by a slow Sarabande in a 3/2 meter. The weight of Spanish occupation is clear. After a repetition, the Spanish dance leads directly into a triple meter Allegro filled with lyrical tunes. Their poignancy clearly insures imminent tragedy. These gentle melodies provide no freedom from destiny. As the music progresses, the measured rhythms from the opening gain urgency and momentum which leads to a huge climax that explodes during the Egmont-Spanish battle. Eventually, the woodwinds chant a somber funeral prayer. Egmont has been defeated, and in fact, beheaded. His lover, Claeche, is represented in a gentle set of melodies... and, in the drama, she promises that Egmont’s death will provide fuel for a later revolt.

But, Beethoven has a surprise for us—all is not lost. Goethe had specifically asked that the ending not be a lament, and Beethoven took him at his word. In place of a summarizing coda, the composer adds new material in a Victory Symphony, emerging in high spirits in the sunny key of F major. Horn and trumpet fanfares abound. The righteousness and vitality of Egmont’s struggle survived the moment of defeat. Theodore

Adorno, the great German social thinker wrote, "If music tries to stay strictly within its autonomous confines, it becomes co-optable, living a harmless life in its appointed niche." Beethoven did not let that happen, and in the Overture to Egmont he provided both lesson and hope.

-Note by Marianne Williams Tobias

Strauss – Horn Concerto

When Richard Strauss (1864-1949) began work on his first concerto for the horn, he may have been only 18 years old, but he already had literally a lifetime of experience in virtuoso horn playing. His father, Franz Joseph Strauss, was principal horn at the Munich Court Orchestra and had been since well before Richard was born. Dour and conservative in musical and personal issues, the elder Strauss was nonetheless almost universally admired in German music circles for his flawless technique and impeccable artistry. He became famous, for example, for his glorious playing in Wagner's operas, compositions - and a composer - he despised. "Strauss is a detestable fellow," Wagner retorted, "but when he plays the horn you can't be angry with him."

This magical playing, and the long hours of practice that supported it, were surely among Richard Strauss' formative musical experiences. Certainly, a love for the French horn and a keen ear for its effective use is apparent in all of Richard's music, from this early concerto through the tone poems - think of the marvelous calls in *Don Juan* and *Till Eulenspiegel*, for just a few examples - the operas, the *Second Horn Concerto* of 1942 (dedicated "to the memory of my father"), and even the autumnal *Four Last Songs*.

Richard Strauss would come to disagree with his father on the subject of Wagner's operas, but in 1882 and 1883 - when he was composing this concerto - he had not yet fallen under the Wagnerian spell. This is a very conservative work in its harmony and a youthful one in its melodic ardor and profligacy, though even in his final years, depressed and discouraged by the vastly changed post-war world around him, Strauss still had big tunes in him.

This concerto is cast in the three movements traditional to European concertos, though as Mendelssohn did in his *E-minor Violin Concerto*,

Strauss links the first two movements. And also like Mendelssohn, he wastes no time introducing the soloist: one chord from the orchestra and the horn jumps in with an energetic fanfare.

Strauss provides the thematic contrasts expected of a late-Romantic opening movement, long-winded lyricism versus dark drama. He deftly slips into the slow movement, a somber, soft-grained place of sweetly haunted tunes, elegantly accompanied. The finale is one of those robust movements full of hunting calls so typical of horn writing. There are ominous developments towards the end, but it closes with brave display. All three movements are linked by varied manipulation of the opening fanfare.

-Note by Howard Posner

Cole - Suite No. 1 from *The Maypole Lovers*

The *First Suite* from '*The Maypole Lovers*' comes from the unperformed opera, *The Maypole Lovers*, by Rossetter Gleason Cole. Cole was born just north of Ann Arbor, Michigan in 1866, and he graduated from The University of Michigan in 1888. After spending two years in Berlin, where he studied composition with Max Bruch, he taught music theory throughout the Midwest before eventually settling in Chicago. His compositions are characterized by their distinct and memorable melodies and by the complex harmonies that accompany them.

The Maypole Lovers takes place at the site of the Merrymount Colony (Mount Wollaston) in Massachusetts. This was a rogue settlement in the 1620s that declared itself separate from the English crown and was defined by its open defiance of religious tradition. They lived in relative freedom, which was juxtaposed by the Massachusetts Bay Colony, the famous Puritan colonists, who had settled approximately twenty miles south of Merrymount. In real life, the Puritans raided Merrymount, burned it to the ground, and deported everyone. In Cole's version, it is a love story (hence the title *The Maypole Lovers*) that takes place between Roger Masterson, of the Puritan colony, and Elspeth Morton, who belongs to the Merrymount camp. While the initial plot was based off Romeo and Juliet, it changed greatly. In the final version, Roger is shot and nearly killed. The opera foregoes dramatic tradition, and Roger lives, leading to a moment of reconciliation and religious acceptance from the Puritans.

The first movement of the *Suite* takes place in the forest, where John Masterson, leader of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, incites the Puritans against the Merrymounters. He plans an attack and capture of the settlement, and, upon later discovering Roger, his son, with Elspeth of the Merrymount Colony, he flies into a fit of rage and banishes Roger from the Puritan Colony. Masterson is depicted by a dark, downwards-accelerating motif. The second movement, conversely, is slow and intimate. It depicts Roger, alone, waiting for Elspeth in a forest glade. In a beautiful aria, he proclaims his love for her before falling asleep on a log. The first two movements of the *Suite* come from Act I of the opera. The third movement comes from Act II and is composed of upbeat dance music from Roger and Elspeth's Merrymount wedding. While not depicted in the music, just as the two are about to be wed, Masterson and his soldiers appear, begin to seize the Merrymounters, and hack the maypole, the central structure of the wedding, to pieces.

The Maypole Lovers was never performed, largely because of its date of composition. It was completed in 1931 – at the very beginning of the Great Depression. Additionally, a composer named Howard Hanson was commissioned by the New York Metropolitan Opera to write an opera on the same subject. This was performed in 1934, which dashed Cole's hopes to perform his. Cole considered the opera to contain the best music he had ever written, and, in order to get the music performed, he wrote his *Two Suites from 'The Maypole Lovers'*. Only the *First* was ever performed, and, because it was never recorded, it has not been heard in almost ninety years.

-- Note by Noah Seim

Mussorgsky – Night on Bald Mountain

The inspiration for this orchestral work was the European legend of St. John's Eve, commemorating the birth of John the Baptist and the June solstice. According to this legend, witches, sorcerers, and demons are given special powers on St. John's Eve, and they gather on an isolated mountain (in the Russian version, Mt. Triglav, near Kiev) for a night of debauchery.

Mussorgsky's *Night on Bald Mountain* was originally subtitled *St. John's Night on the Bare*

Mountain. His notes for this work are as follows: "Subterranean din of supernatural voices. Appearance of Spirits of Darkness, followed by that

of the god Tchernobog. Glorification of The Black God, The Black Mass. Witches' Sabbath, interrupted at its height by the sounds of the far-off bell of the little church in a village. It disperses the Spirits of Darkness. Daybreak."

Mussorgsky was familiar with Liszt's Totentanz (also on today's program), and there are many similarities between the two works. Both are variations on the Dies irae (Day of wrath) plainsong, and both are in the key of D minor. Fittingly, Mussorgsky completed the first version of Night on Bald Mountain on St. John's Eve (June 23), 1867. He revised the score in 1872 for the cooperative opera-ballet Mlada, adding a chorus, and then again in 1880 when he incorporated the work into his opera titled The Fair at Sorochyntsi.

Mussorgsky never heard a performance of Night on Bald Mountain. After his death in 1881, his colleague Rimsky-Korsakov made additional revisions, which included cutting approximately two minutes' worth of music, reworking some of the orchestration, and writing a new ending. This version was published in 1886, and has become the standard version in the orchestral repertoire; it is this version that we will be hearing in today's concert.

-Note by Laura Artesan

Rebecca Salo, Horn

Rebecca Salo is the Assistant Professor of Horn at Grand Valley State University. As an active performer, she holds the position of Principal Horn in the Champaign-Urbana Symphony Orchestra, and she regularly performs with a variety of other ensembles. During the summers, Rebecca enjoys teaching and performing as faculty at Blue Lake Fine Arts Camp. Prior to joining GVSU, she held positions as Principal Horn in the Paducah Symphony Orchestra, Principal Horn in the Evansville Philharmonic Orchestra, Consortium Instructor of Horn at the University of Evansville, and Founder and Artistic Director of the Evansville Homeschool Band. She holds degrees from Purdue University (Bachelor of Science in Electrical Engineering) and Indiana University (Master of Music in Horn Performance), and she has pursued doctoral studies at the Eastman School of Music.

Alpha Personnel Roster

Violin 1	Double Bass	Horn
Noah Abdelkader*	Mark Buchner+	Eli Gibson
Sam Bergman	Claire Crabbe	Annabelle
Vera Bresser	Elliott Leenhouts	Hessler
Willow Davidson	Andrew Lunn*	Erich Peterson+
Maggie Fisher	Samantha Rometty	Elijah Pletcher+
Andrew Kales		Elizabeth
Kayla Shook	Piccolo	Slabaugh*
Kenny Walker	Brittlyn Keller	
Yu Xin+	Julia Meyer	Trumpet
		Madison
Violin 2	Flute	Cornelius*
Marcella Brown	Brittlyn Keller*	Alex Wilson+
Adam Fox	Julia Meyer*	Alejandro
Maria Hindeleh	James Thompson+	Zorilla*
Adalyn Kasuba	Jillaena Weesies*	
Priscilla Martin		Trombone
Danny Parker	Oboe	Micah Babinski
Arya Schaendorf*	Nyx Johnson	Ryan
Jae Won Seo+	Elisa Skinner*	Christianson+
Aiden Zemaitis	English Horn	Erik Courtney*
	Marlen Vavrikova+	Elizabeth
Viola		Phillips*
Barb Corbató+	Clarinet	
Emma Cornish	Sophia Janiga	Tuba
Adalie Covey	Gary June+	Jorge Gonzalez
Sarah Johncox	Maddox Lewis*	
Braedyn MacKeller*		Timpani
Lila Powers	Bass Clarinet	Ash Martinez-
Elizabeth Rothermel	Maddox Lewis	Lopez
Cello	Bassoon	Percussion
Seamus Adams	Seth Silver*	Ramses Arispe
Giselle Balivet	Ruth Wilson+	Dyami Campos
Jake Doctor*		Thomas Cordes
Megan Ferenczhalmay	Contra Bassoon	
Thomas Gilligan	Andrew Genemens+	Harp
Grace Jenkins		Alison Reese+
Pablo Mahave-Veglia+		
Gabrielle Peck*		*Section
Levi Smith*		Principal
		+Guest Artist

Names are listed in alphabetical order to emphasize the contribution of each player

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