

JOACHIM (GEORG) NIKOLAS EGGERT

was born in the small town of Gingst on the island of Rügen in Swedish Pomerania (now part of Germany) on 22 February 1779, the son of a local cobbler. His earliest musical education was by rote from a local musician, and for three years beginning in 1791 he was trained in violin, harp, and keyboard, as well as elementary theory by Johann Friedrich Dammas, the local church organist. In 1794 he was sent to Stralsund, the largest city in the region, to continue his musical education under the cantor Friedrich Gregor Kuhlow. At the time, he had the first of a series of serious health concerns, initially brought on by familial stress at his choice of occupation.

For the next six years he studied violin, counterpoint and composition in Stralsund, composing his first pieces for the local entertainments. In 1800, however, he was sent at Kuhlow's recommendation to Braunschweig, where he completed his musical education under Ferdinand Fischer and Friedrich Gottlob Fleischer, conductor of the Musikalische Gesellschaftskonzerte. It is likely that Eggert's first compositions for orchestra may have been written for this public concert series, although he composed music for a variety of sacred and secular venues, winning praise for his talent. In 1802 he obtained the post of Director of Music at the court theatre of Duke Friedrich Franz I of Mecklenberg-Schwerin, but resigned after only six months in a jurisdictional dispute over artistic issues.

Following a brief sojourn at his parent's home in Gingst, he ventured north to attempt to find employment at the Russian court in St. Petersburg. His journey took him by way of Stockholm, where he arrived on 7 July 1803. A second serious illness forced him to abandon his travels, and through the efforts of Swedish Kapellmeister Johann Christian Friedrich Haeffner, he was offered the position of violinist in the Hovkapell only a month later. Further commissions for music and promises of expanded opportunities persuaded him to stay in Stockholm, and his reputation as one of the principal composers of the country was solidified the next year by his popular Funeral Music for Duke Fredrik Adolf. On 14 May 1805 the public concert series premiered his C-minor symphony, and two years later he was elected to the Royal Swedish Academy of Music. In 1808, his mentor Haeffner was dismissed from his post, and Eggert was appointed as Interim Kapellmeister along with fellow countryman Heinrich Küster to take over the newly-reorganized Hovkapell. His conducting and programmatic innovations were greatly admired by the Stockholm public. In 1808 he premiered Beethoven symphonies, followed in 1810 by Haydn's *Die Jahreszeiten* and in 1812 introduced local audiences to Mozart by premiering *Die Zauberflöte*. His own music was well-regarded, and he was sought after as a teacher. His students included Bernhard Henrik Crusell, Erik Drake, Ludwig Passy, and Johan Martin de Ron. Along with Drake and Leonard Fredrik Raaf, he also began a project to collect Swedish folk music and instruments, one of the first intimations of nineteenth century nationalism in music.

As with other musical figures in Sweden, he was sent by the new monarch, Carl XIII, on a grand tour of Europe to view the latest musical and theatrical trends. In 1812 he began plans for the journey, only to fall ill at the first stage. He attempted to recover his health in the province of Östergötland at the estate of his student Drake in the town of Follingsö, but it continued to deteriorate, even as he briefly moved on to Thomestorp, the home of Raaf, where he died of tuberculosis on 14 April 1813.

As a composer, Eggert was multifaceted and his works achieved considerable recognition among Stockholm audiences. His compositions for official occasions were far more popular than their original purposes and were performed frequently in concerts. His music to the dramas *Mohrerne i Spanien* (*The Moors in Spain*) and *Svante Sture*, 1809 and 1812 respectively, helped to stem the decline of native Swedish post-Gustavian stage productions. He wrote a variety of chamber works, including 10 string quartets (of which nine were published), a magnificent sextet for clarinet, horn/basset horn, violin, viola, cello, and bass as well as one for two violins, two violas, cello and bass, and a piano quartet. Among his most important compositions, however, are four symphonies, composed between 1805 and 1809; a fifth symphony in the key of D minor remains a fragment of only the exposition of the first movement. The works are characterized by a large orchestration, filled with unique and brilliant tone colors and sonorities. His music has a flair for the dramatic, with intricate counterpoint and often long, lyrical themes that are developed in place.

The Symphony in C major consists of four movements: a C-minor *Adagio mesto* begins with strong chords and pungent dissonances that are reminiscent of Haydn's *Representation of Chaos* from his *Creation*. This leads to a brilliant *Allegro con brio* that has a long, lyrical almost Schubertian main theme, made more interesting by the use of full percussion. Rapid scalar passages in a transition devolve into a second lyrical theme that is developed in total for several variations. The instrumentation is delicate and elegant, passing into a full-voiced closing theme that features imitative scales. This contrast is used and varied in the central portion until a full-blow recapitulation. This "thematic work" is less reminiscent of Haydn than foreshadows Schubert some twenty years later. The second movement is a Haydnesque 2/4 *Andante* that sounds very much like it was taken from one of the latter's London symphonies in its melodic simplicity. The first variation is in the minor key and maintains a thicker texture with a running bass line and contrasting major key central point. The second

variation is textural, with additional winds varying the tune with some *Harmoniemusik*. In the final variation, portions of each of the previous music reappear, being further developed both melodically and harmonically. The thick orchestration is often foreshadowing that of Brahms in its thickness and wind counter-melodies. The third movement is marked as a minuet, but the opening motivic triplets and juxtaposition of winds and strings is Mendelssohnian in sonority. There is a hint of minor key before the orchestra bursts forth in a brilliant major. The trio section is contrasting with a spare flute solo at the beginning that returns to the minor key with the entrance of the full orchestra. We are in the world of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* that is far from either Haydn or even Beethoven. The finale is marked *Allegro vivace* and we once thought to be a fantasy on some sort of Swedish folk song. But the main tune is more like a presto Haydn finale that moves forward in perpetual motion. The long sequencing into the second section has a Beethoven like quality, but the orchestration is clear and precise, something more akin to Schubert. This secondary theme is then used to develop the piece further in the middle section, with a brief minor section broken by sudden forte bass and fragmented motives, as well as a display of complex fugal counterpoint. In the recapitulation, both the primary and secondary themes are juxtaposed on top of each other, providing, as Lennart Hedwall noted, "a veritable display of genius." As a conclusion Eggert diminishes the dynamic level down to a *ppp* before launching into a powerful *tour de force* coda with scurrying basses and brass fanfare chords.

The textures and compositional techniques used in this symphony, coupled with a prescient sense of orchestral color, mark this as a masterwork, made all the more remarkable in that it predates works by composers with which it has marked affinities, such as Schubert, Mendelssohn, and Brahms. Although there is a Haydnesque sense of play throughout, the adroit use of thematic contrast, the expanded variation techniques, the changing dynamic levels and rapid use of repetition and sequence, and the creation of lyrical themes mark this symphony as advanced beyond its date of composition, and in turn demonstrates that Eggert was one of the most individualistic composers of his period.

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