

Joachim Nikolas
EGGERT

Symphonies Nos. 1 and 3
Incidental Music to Svante Sture

Gävle Symphony Orchestra
Gérard Korsten



Joachim Nikolas Eggert (1779–1813)

Symphonies Nos. 1 and 3 • Overture: The Moors in Spain • Incidental Music to Svante Sture

The circumstances in which public concerts in Sweden found themselves after the assassination of King Gustav III in 1792 were anything but happy, and a decline over the next decade became evident. In December of that year the *Kapellmästare* Joseph Martin Kraus, arguably Sweden's greatest composer of the eighteenth-century symphony, died shortly thereafter, and his other colleagues, Johann Friedrich Grenser and Johan David Zander, both of whom were mainstays in the public concerts, were to follow over the next four years, leaving Sweden with a dearth of capable composers. The arrival of the violinist and singer Edouard Du Puy in 1794 augured well for a revival, but in the aftermath of the political situation of 1800, both he and Abbé Vogler were forced to leave Stockholm. Therefore music in both public concerts and opera stagnated until the summer of 1803, when Joachim Nikolas Eggert (1779–1813) arrived in Sweden.

Eggert was born off the Baltic coast of Germany on the island of Rügen in the small village of Gingst on 22nd February 1779. He was the son of a cobbler and even though he displayed musical talent during his youth, it was not until the age of eleven that he began to learn music from a local performer, who believed that notes were a waste of time and one should only learn by ear. Fortunately a local organist, Johann Friedrich Dammas, took the child under his wing in 1791 and instructed him for three years in theory, violin, keyboard, and harp. Against his father's wishes, Eggert went to Stralsund in 1794 to continue his training under Friedrich Kuhlow. In 1800 he completed his education in music composition in Braunschweig under Ferdinand Fischer and Friedrich Gottlob Fleischer and two years later was offered the post of *Kapellmeister* at the court of Mecklenburg-Schwerin. There he found circumstances less than ideal and left after only six months.

Though he contemplated giving up music during a brief sojourn at home in Gingst, he decided to travel to St Petersburg to join the Russian Imperial Chapel. A serious illness caused him to abandon his journey in Stockholm, however, where he was offered a position as a violinist.

Over the next several years his reputation as a composer spread and in 1807 he was appointed *Kapellmeister* and a member of the Royal Swedish Academy of Music. When the new monarch, Carl XIII, reorganized the establishment with the intent on returning it to its former glory in 1810, Eggert was designated to go on a grand tour. Unfortunately he fell fatally ill and died on 14th April 1813 at the home of one of his students who lived in the Swedish countryside.

Eggert was well-known for his progressive musical work. As conductor of the public concerts, he introduced Beethoven to Stockholm audiences in 1808, and over the next years performed Haydn's late oratorios and Mozart's *Magic Flute*. He was himself lauded for his music for the plays *The Moors in Spain* and *Svante Sture*, as well as his chamber music; nine of his ten quartets were published and critically acclaimed throughout Europe. His most innovative works, however, were his four symphonies — the fifth was left unfinished at his death — representing the epitome of the Swedish symphony between Kraus and Franz Berwald. He also collaborated with his pupil Erik Drake in gathering one of the first collections of Swedish folk-music.

The music on this recording includes two of the four symphonies, his three-movement *Symphony No. 3 in E flat major* written in 1807 and the four-movement *Symphony No. 1 in C major* composed about 1804–1805. In addition, it includes the *Overture to Mohrerne i Spanien* (The Moors in Spain), part of a series of pieces composed for insertion into the comedy by Mårten Årtén, based upon a French original work, as well as the incidental music to the drama *Svante Sture* by Per Adolf Granberg from 1812. The overture is a sprightly piece that leaps headfirst into a rollicking main theme with scurrying violins rushing about madly. When the “Moorish” percussion is added, the work bubbles, with moments reminiscent of Carl Maria von Weber (*Abu Hassan*) and Rossini not far behind. It is a compact work that seems to end almost as abruptly as it began.

Eggert did not write an overture to Granberg's nationalist play *Svante Sture*, a play about the madness of King Erik in the sixteenth century. Instead he composed a series of

entr'actes, beginning with a simple march for woodwind. The first entr'acte [6] has an extended solo for bassoon, almost a concerto movement, though the march tempo heard in [5] persists. This is followed by a rushing short movement in D major [7], with tremolo strings, which is almost a throwback to Mozart. The second entr'acte [8] is a regal march with trumpets and drum fanfares. This contrasts with a very Beethovenian march for strings and winds that concludes Act II, and which also serves as a prelude to Act III [9]. The next march is in G minor [10] and more sinister in mood, though it has a central section consisting of a solemn chorale marking the intercession of the nuns of St Clara in the play to save Count Sture from his mercurial sovereign. This makes the return of the march seem even implacable. The penultimate entr'acte between Acts III and IV [11] is a gentle contrast, a bit of pre-Brahmsian sentimentality indicating the love of Sture and Marta Leijonhuvud, his wife. The final entr'acte [12] is a forceful C major march with alternating trumpets and horns giving it a regal air of triumph. All of these movements are short and succinct, indicating their rôle as subsidiary to the drama on stage.

The main works are, of course the two symphonies. The *Symphony in C major* is a large-scale conventional piece with hints of both Mozart and Haydn in its lyrical themes and fast-paced tempos. It was perhaps the first work written in Stockholm when Eggert arrived in the city, for it had its première in a private performance in April 1805, conducted by Johann Christian Friedrich Haeffner, Eggert's predecessor and soon to be dismissed conductor. The overwhelming response allowed for a public première two weeks later. In the long opening *Allegro*, which follows a slow introduction in C minor filled with powerful chords and dissonance, the main theme is developed in place, almost sounding Schubertian. Eggert uses contrast and a full percussion section to give the work colour, and in the development section he modulates toward some of the more remote keys, much as Beethoven does. The second movement is his most Haydnesque, a theme and variations that seems as if it belongs to one of the London symphonies. Woodwind countermelodies punctuate the development of the simple main theme, which has a central section with large percussion similar to Haydn's *Military*

Symphony. The woodwind writing is particularly colourful, providing shading to the various strings, including a quirky flute part. The third movement may be marked *Minuet and Trio*, but it is fast, in C minor, and with a drive that is decidedly Scherzo-like. The use of wind textures foreshadows Mendelssohn in its rich harmonies and contrasting use that seems right out of his *Midsummer Night's Dream*. The final movement, a variation on a Swedish popular folk-song entitled *Gustafs skål*, is a perpetual motion dynamo. Fragmented motives are sequenced and there is a brief display of complex fugal counterpoint before it collapses to a false cadence. The final coda, with scurrying basses, is a magnificent tour de force that brings the entire symphony to a raucous conclusion.

The *Symphony in E flat* is an unusual work in which a large-scale sonata form first movement is bookended by a gigantic fugal finale where the main subject is presented in another slow introduction and sped up as the main theme of the *Allegro* that follows. It was composed probably during 1806-1807 and had its première in May of the latter year in a concert largely featuring Eggert's own compositions. In this work he makes good use of the disciplined Stockholm Hovkapell, which at the time numbered about sixty players. He also writes for three independent trombones; the first performance of this symphony predates Beethoven's *Fifth*, often cited as the work in which trombones are featured, by eighteen months, though the Hovkapell actually had these instruments on the payroll as early as 1790. Both the finale and the slow march second movement were adapted from his 1805 *Funeral Music for Duke Adolph Frederik*, and thus the entire symphony seems to have been a bit of a pastiche, rather than a cohesive whole. In the first movement, the main theme is elaborate and developed in place, with many abrupt rhythmic changes from duple to triple and a wide range of dynamic markings. He uses orchestral colour to create kaleidoscopic moments of light and shade, and even as the movement draws to a close with a huge climax, there is a collapse down to a triple piano, forcing it to become more introspective. The effect would foreshadow the Romantic tone poem, save that it prefaces two extremely severe movements that are terse and unyielding in terms of their mood. The march is a solemn procession, seemingly

fit for a Sarastro and his ethereal realm. The introduction to the fugue, with its stentorian trombone theme, seems implacable in mood, though the textures are lighter and airier following the initial announcement. The fugue itself with an all-enveloping violin counter-theme is strict and powerful, though it fades away at the end to a quadruple piano, ending on a note of mystery.

These two symphonies alone demonstrate that Joachim Nikolas Eggert ought to be considered as one of the more important composers of the Beethoven era, even though he did not compete in Central European musical spheres. They show a progressive evolution, all too briefly to come to an end without further Swedish successors until Berwald half a century later.

A Note on the Numbering of Eggert's Symphonies

Although Eggert wrote only four symphonies, with a fifth incomplete beyond the exposition of the first movement, the numbering of these has varied considerably since work was begun on them by Stig Walin in 1942. Various proposals based upon a fluid composition history have been proposed by a number of scholars, including the present author (in 1983 in the series *The Symphony 1720-1830*). The current numbering is expected to be the final one, given that documentary research into the dates of composition,

particularly by the late Avishai Kallai, has left little doubt as to their order. Accordingly, the two disc première recordings of all four works reflect this latest and final order. The only changes that might be forthcoming is if another symphony (or possibly more than one) dating from the period prior to his arrival in Sweden come to light in the future. In any case these would be analogous to Beethoven, whose canon of nine symphonies is vouchsafed, though his official first was written only about the age of thirty.

Bertil van Boer

G rard Korsten

Born in South Africa, G rard Korsten began his career as a violinist, after studying with Ivan Galamian at the Curtis Institute and with S ndor V gh in Salzburg. Following his studies in the United States and Europe, he became Concertmaster and Assistant Music Director of the Camerata Salzburg and later Concertmaster of the Chamber Orchestra of Europe (1987-1996). In 2005 he was appointed Principal Conductor of the Symphonieorchester Vorarlberg, Bregenz. His past engagements include concerts with the Budapest Festival, Leipzig Gewandhaus, BBC Scottish Symphony, Swedish Radio Symphony, and G vle Symphony Orchestras, and he has appeared at many notable opera houses, including La Scala Milan, Royal Swedish Opera and English National Opera. Featured among G rard Korsten's many recordings are Tchaikovsky's *Serenade* and *Souvenir de Florence* with the Chamber Orchestra of Europe on Deutsche Grammophon and a DVD of *Le nozze di Figaro* at La Scala Milan, which was awarded a Diapason d'Or and was Critic's Choice in *Opera News*.

Photo: Marco Borggreve





Gävle Symphony Orchestra

The Gävle Symphony Orchestra is one of the oldest in Sweden, and celebrated its 100th anniversary in 2012. The conductor and composer Ruben Liljefors was the orchestra's first artistic director, with 25 musicians at his disposal. Over the years, the orchestra has grown to 52 full-time members. Based chiefly at the Gävle Concert Hall, the orchestra tours regularly, both in its home province and elsewhere in Sweden, Scandinavia and the rest of Europe. Since its inception, the Gävle Symphony Orchestra has had a succession of distinguished principal conductors, including Stig Westerberg, Rainer Miedel, Göran W. Nilson, Hannu Koivula, Carlos Spierer, Petri Sakari and Robin Ticciati. The Spanish conductor Jaime Martín has been the orchestra's principal conductor and artistic leader since 2013. Since 1998 the orchestra's home has been the Gävle Concert Hall, regarded as one of Sweden's best, where the excellent acoustics are preferred by the orchestra, guest artists and ensembles making recordings. The orchestra's discography lists recordings of works by composers Bo Linde, Wilhelm Stenhammar, Franz Berwald, Hugo Alfvén, Edvard Grieg, Dmitry Shostakovich, Carl Nielsen and Sven-David Sandström.

Photo: Frank Julin

Born on the island of Rügen off Germany's Baltic coast, Joachim Nikolas Eggert arrived in Sweden in 1803, soon establishing himself as a progressive conductor and introducing Beethoven to Stockholm audiences. Welcomed overwhelmingly on its première, Eggert's large-scale *First Symphony* hints at Mozart and Haydn but foreshadows Mendelssohn in its wind textures and rich harmonies. The *Third Symphony* is kaleidoscopic in its moments of light and shade and unusual in its gigantic fugal finale. First of a two-volume set, these two symphonies alone demonstrate that Eggert should be considered one of the more important composers of his era.

Joachim Nikolas EGGERT (1779–1813)

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| <p>1 Mohrene i Spanien
(The Moors in Spain) –
Incidental Music: Overture 2:38</p> <p>Symphony No. 3 in
E flat major (1807) 21:07</p> <p>2 I. Adagio maestoso – Allegro
spiritoso 13:08</p> <p>3 II. Marche: Grave 3:21</p> <p>4 III. Fugue: Adagio maestoso –
Allegro 4:32</p> <p>Svante Sture –
Incidental Music (1812)* 14:15</p> <p>5 I. Marche 1:25</p> <p>6 II. Entr'acte between Acts I & II 2:02</p> | <p>7 III. Postlude after Act II 0:53</p> <p>8 IV. Entr'acte between Acts II & III 2:21</p> <p>9 V. Prelude to Act III: Marche 1:15</p> <p>10 VI. Marche and Chorale 3:56</p> <p>11 VII. Entr'acte between Acts III
& IV 1:13</p> <p>12 VIII. Entr'acte between Acts IV
& V 1:09</p> <p>Symphony No. 1 in C major
(c. 1804–1805)* 28:09</p> <p>13 I. Adagio mesto – Allegro con brio 10:53</p> <p>14 II. Andante 6:08</p> <p>15 III. Minuet and Trio: Allegro 3:38</p> <p>16 IV. Finale: Allegro vivace 7:26</p> |
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* WORLD PREMIÈRE RECORDINGS

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Gérard Korsten

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