



Interlochen

ARTS CAMP

Interlochen, Michigan
121st Program of the 97th Season

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WORLD YOUTH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
Matthew Straw, conductor

Sunday, July 14, 2024
7:30pm, Kresge Auditorium

WORLD YOUTH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Matthew Straw, conductor

PROGRAM

Overture to *Egmont*, Op. 84..... Ludwig van Beethoven
(1770-1827)

Sighting the Swallow Bobby Ge
(b. 1996)

*Sighting the Swallow was co-commissioned by
Interlochen Center for the Arts and the New York Youth Symphony*

La Mer Claude Debussy
De l'aube a midi sur la mer (1862-1918)
Jeux de Vagues
Dialogue du Vent et de la Mer

*The audience is requested to remain seated
during the playing of the Interlochen Theme.*

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PROGRAM NOTES

by Amanda Sewell

Overture to *Egmont*, Op. 84

Ludwig van Beethoven

Instrumentation: two flutes, piccolo, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, timpani, strings

Duration: 9 minutes

Content note: This essay mentions suicide.

Ludwig van Beethoven had strong political ideals, and he made no attempt to hide them. It's well known that he originally called his Symphony No. 3 "Bonaparte" after Napoleon and then removed the subtitle and dedication after Napoleon crowned himself emperor. (He renamed it simply "Eroica," or "heroic.") To Beethoven, Napoleon had let his personal need for power supersede a desire to do right by political ideals. Beethoven was outspoken in his beliefs against Napoleon, supposedly telling a violinist colleague, "It's a pity I don't understand

the art of war as well as I understand the art of music, or I would conquer Napoleon." Beethoven also began dedicating compositions to political leaders whose views he admired but whom he had likely never met and who, importantly, hadn't commissioned those pieces from him. It was highly unusual for a composer to dedicate music to someone who hadn't paid to have it composed for them, which makes Beethoven's unpaid dedications especially notable.

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's play *Egmont* depicts political ideals that are closely aligned with Beethoven's, so it's not surprising that he poured himself into writing incidental music for this play in 1810. Goethe had completed the play more than two decades earlier, and he was still very much alive when Beethoven wrote the incidental music to accompany it. Based on events from the Eighty Years' War (1566-1648), the play follows the noble Count Egmont as he battles against the despotic Grand Duke of Alba. Even when threatened with arrest and execution, Egmont does not give up his political ideals. He is sentenced to death after everyone except his mistress Klärchen abandons him. Klärchen tries to free him, and when she fails, she poisons herself and dies by suicide. Egmont is executed after he gives an impassioned speech calling for the continued fight for independence. Beethoven was particularly moved by the ideals of national liberation, personal freedom, and the willingness of a magnanimous leader to sacrifice himself for a just cause.

Beethoven's complete incidental music for *Egmont* features a symphony orchestra, a soprano soloist as Klärchen, and a male narrator. The 10 movements run about 40 minutes in length and include two songs for Klärchen, plus an overture, several entr'actes, and a "Victory Symphony" heard after Egmont's final speech. Goethe was pleased with the incidental music, noting, "Beethoven has followed my intentions with admirable genius." Over the last 200 years, however, it's rare to hear Beethoven's complete *Egmont* performed, and even more unusual to present Goethe's play with Beethoven's incidental music. The *Egmont* overture, however, has become a staple of orchestral repertoire and is what is presented on today's concert.

Sighting the Swallow

Bobby Ge

Instrumentation: three flutes, three clarinets, three oboes, three bassoons, four trumpets, three horns, three trombones, one tuba, timpani, three percussion, piano (celesta), strings

Duration: 10 minutes

Composer Bobby Ge (pronounced "Jee" in English, but the original Chinese 戈 is pronounced 'G-uh' with a hard "g") grew up going back and forth between the United States and China and has said that he frequently felt like "home" was an elusive concept for him. When he began work on this piece in 2022, he felt

particularly disconnected from “home” because he was traveling so frequently. He was technically living in Baltimore, but between teaching, composition residencies, and other engagements, Ge was traveling at least once a month. In 2022, Ge spent time in 20 different cities, all while teaching and working on his Ph.D. in music composition at Princeton University. It’s not surprising that such constant travel could leave him feeling rootless.

He has written that this period of his life made him feel lonely, not only because he was traveling so much, but also because many parts of his life had undergone what he calls “seismic upheavals,” including relationships with his family, his faith, and his community. “As I introduced myself again and again to dozens of new people in dozens of new places,” Ge has written, “I started to feel as though my name was the only point of stability I had left.”

In a 2024 interview with Interlochen Public Radio, Ge said that it was hard for him to maintain any consistent sense of community or belonging during this period. He was constantly on the move, and he was trying to write music sitting in airports and while on airplanes and in hotel rooms. It was during this period that Ge received the commission for a new piece, which would become *Sighting the Swallow*. He drew on two main ideas for this piece: (1) the idea of countering loneliness, specifically the kind of loneliness he was feeling with his frequent travel, and (2) writing music specifically for youth orchestras and young performers.

For the first idea of countering loneliness, Ge landed on the idea of a swallow, a small migratory bird that is found on every continent. In China, he said, swallows symbolize family life and values, because despite traveling thousands of miles, swallows continue to care for each other and for their young. Ge started thinking about how these birds that are so rarely sedentary or grounded could also symbolize community and togetherness.

For the second idea of youth, Ge thought about emotional transparency and immediacy, considering the fresh perspectives that younger people can have when experiencing the world. Ge said that he tied this immediacy to what he experienced during his travels, as he was constantly going to new places, meeting new people, and taking in new surroundings.

Today is only the second time that Bobby Ge’s *Sighting the Swallow* (2022) has been performed, and he is present for today’s performance. The piece was co-commissioned by Interlochen Center for the Arts and New York Youth Symphony. The world premiere took place in March 2023, with Michael Repper conducting the Grammy Award-winning New York Youth Symphony.

For a complete transcript of IPR’s conversation with composer Bobby Ge, visit interlochenpublicradio.org

La Mer

Claude Debussy

Instrumentation: piccolo, two flutes, two oboes, English horn, two clarinets, three bassoons, contrabassoon, four horns, three trumpets, two cornets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion, two harps, and strings

Duration: 25 minutes

Content note: This essay mentions suicide.

Claude Debussy had greatly admired the sea since his childhood. At one point, he wanted to be a sailor, but instead chose music. His family enrolled him at the Paris Conservatory at the age of 10, and he studied there for the next 11 years. As he got older, though, Debussy cared less and less about all the “rules” of music that he was supposed to be learning and following. He just didn’t care, writing, “I am too enamored of my freedom and too fond of my own ideas!” His teachers and mentors weren’t impressed, calling his music “incomprehensible” and “bizarre” and doubting if musicians could even perform it. He ended his formal studies and set out on his own, perhaps not unlike a sailor.

Debussy deliberately ignored some of the formal composition rules he had been taught, but he also just wrote what he liked and what he thought sounded beautiful. In the first movement of *La Mer*, for example, Debussy subdivided the cellos into several parts (this is so unusual that this passage has been included in many orchestration textbooks, meaning that Debussy, who despised rules, is now a literal textbook example). Surprising and unexpected combinations of instruments appear throughout the piece, such as cellos combined with English horns and the use of two harps. None of the movements adhere to any particular form such as sonata-form, theme and variations, or rondo; ideas unfold, and they may or may not return. The focus is on color and sensation, not on form. As Debussy famously said, “There is no theory. You have only to listen. Pleasure is the law!”

The 1905 premiere of *La Mer* was delayed because Debussy was embroiled in scandal. He had recently left his wife Lilly Texier for the married Emma Bardac. Texier publicly shot herself and survived, and Debussy refused to visit her in the hospital or pay her medical bills, even though they were still married. He and the pregnant Bardac fled to England for a period of time to finalize their divorces, which delayed the premiere of *La Mer*. Not only was the premiere delayed, but a number of friends and advocates severed ties with him, including composers Maurice Ravel, Paul Dukas, and Gabriel Fauré (curiously, Fauré and Bardac had had an affair a few years earlier and remained friends; his disdain for Debussy came from a desire to protect Bardac).

This wasn’t even the first time that Debussy’s licentiousness affected his professional life. A decade earlier, he faced public outcry because he began an

affair with singer Therese Roger while living with yet another woman, Gabrielle Dupont. In that case, he lost several friends, financial supporters, and mentors, including composer Ernest Chausson. He subsequently left Dupont for Texier, apparently threatening suicide if she wouldn't marry him. It seems that Debussy's disdain for rules reached well beyond his compositional style and into his personal life. Mary Garden, one of Debussy's few remaining friends, recalled, "I honestly don't know if he ever really loved anybody. He loved his music and perhaps himself."

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Matthew Straw is the newly appointed Assistant Conductor of the Opéra national du Rhin's Opéra Studio (Strasbourg National Opera), where he will debut with a production of *Les contes d'Hoffmann* which travels to Opéra de Reims in 2025. Previously, he was Assistant Conductor of the Utah Symphony, where he worked with Music Director Emeritus Thierry Fischer and Creative Partner David Robertson, and conducted over 80 concerts. In recent seasons he has conducted the Rochester Philharmonic, New World Symphony, Aspen Music Festival, and Des Moines Metro Opera.

Straw has assisted leading conductors, such as Donald Runnicles, Cristian Măcelaru, and Kazushi Ono, working with the Brussels Philharmonic, ORF-Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra, Saint Louis Symphony, and Salzburg Festival. He was the Helen F. Whitaker Conducting Fellow at the 2019 Aspen Music Festival, Conducting Fellow at the 2023 Cabrillo Festival, and a participant in the 2018 Järvi Academy of Conducting. He has participated in master classes with Stéphane Denève, James Gaffigan, Nicholas McGegan, Cristian Măcelaru, Ludovic Morlot, Yannick Nézet-Séguin, Neeme and Paavo Järvi, Mark Stringer, Michael Tilson Thomas, and Robert Spano.

Straw holds degrees in conducting, piano, philosophy, and voice from Oberlin College and Conservatory of Music and the Eastman School of Music where his teachers included Robert Spano, Neil Varon, and Stanislav Ioudenitch. He is a recipient of the 2015 National YoungArts Award, First Prize Winner at the 2014 Schmidt Competition, and a three-time recipient of the Solti Foundation Career Assistance Award. Matthew Straw is represented by Rachel van Walsum of Maestro Arts.

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+ Denotes Concertmaster ^ Denotes Principal Chair

* Denotes Interlochen Orchestral Scholar. This merit-based scholarship recognizes exceptional high-school musicians in the Orchestra program.

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The musicians are listed alphabetically after principals.

WORLD YOUTH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Nicholas Clark, ensemble manager Adrienne Sherrod, librarian

VIOLIN I

Tarquin Bennion, Mont.*+
Guillem Baviera Fuste, Spain*
Luis Manuel Bonilla, Texas
Eli Braunschneider, Mich.
Elias Cohen, Fla.
Amelia Kang, Calif.
Momica Lu, Canada*
Jonathan Milgram, Costa Rica
Kaylee Nah, Ore.*
Connor Pruett, Texas
Regina Sanchez Galvez, Mich.
Hannah Schweiger, Calif.
Alex Sun, Calif.
Alex Workman, N.C.
Hongrun Zhu, China

VIOLIN II

Vittoria Pugina, Colo.^
Nichole Aye, Calif.
Richard Celiceo, N.Y.
Carmen DeAtley-Rosales, Ky.
Alex Gemeinhardt, N.Y.
Phekia Joseph, Fla.
Anthony Kim, Calif.*
Maddie Koo, Mich.
Costantino Negri da Oleggio,
Italy
Rory Pitts, Calif.
Sam Shea, Texas
Zolin Williams, Calif.
Chloe Yan, Wash.
Christopher Zhu, N.Y.

VIOLA

Cristian Yohannes, Texas*^
Tristan Chaffee, Ohio
Natalie Coleman, Mo.*
Christian Jones, Calif.
Rachel Mason, Calif.
Alex Prodan, Okla.
Cayden Stathakos, Texas*
Ha Jin Sung, Hong Kong
Savonte Vaughn, S.C.*

VIOLA cont.

Dana Wang, N.Y.
Steven Zhang, Ariz.*

CELLO

Simon Carter, Ore.^
Gudrun Campbell, Va.
Ryan Chong, Texas
Juliet Diaz Onderwyzer,
N.Y.
Aiden Ko, South Korea
Maggie Liu, Ga.
Charlie Pabst, Ariz.~
Jisoo Park, Mich.
Samuel Richards, Wash.
Pierce Thurow, Mass.
Bryce Williams, Ill.
Evelyn Yang, England*

DOUBLE BASS

Collin LeBlanc, Fla.*^
Mia Bayardo, Mich.
Charlotte Cochran, Colo.
CJ Inkenhaus, Pa.
Yuvin Kang, Ga.*
Collin Marbutt, Ga.
Sam Moon, Ga.*
Riley Rheinheimer, N.M.

FLUTE

Faith Murphy, Ind.^
(piccolo)
Mariana Perez-Alvarez,
Texas (piccolo)
Marko Sretenović,
Serbia*
Yuzuka Williams, Calif.~
(piccolo)

OBOE

Joe Mitchell, Ky.^
Sarah Kim, Md.*
Adrian McGill, Utah (E.H.)
Kate Roberts, Texas

CLARINET

Will Hemmelgarn, Ohio^
Chris Cui, N.C.
Tom Wang, Wash. (bass)
Larry Zhao, Wash.~

BASSOON

Damian Carrasco, Texas^
Andie Wisniewski, Wis.
(contra)
Paul Wittmer, N.Y.*

HORN

Sam Bangert, Texas*^
Liam Barnstead, Va.
Matthew Li, Calif.*
Ben Shugart, Texas

TRUMPET

Ben Mitchell, N.C.^
Jakob Burnham, Mich.
Bernie Chan, N.Y.
Gabriel Luza, N.C.
Madi Turrentine, Texas

TROMBONE

Will Cranston, Texas^
Oliver Lee, Wash.
Caden Wolfe, Fla.~(bass)

TUBA

Barrett Hoover, Okla.

PERCUSSION

Michael Manching, Ill.^
Eve Gordon, Ga.
Joel Moss, Alaska
Grayson Pruitt, Ga.*
Sophia Stehlik, N.Y.

HARP

Cory Lin, Canada^
Greta Hodes, Mo.
Calene Lee, Calif.
Annabelle Wang, N.C.

PIANO/CELESTA

Hsin-Hui Liu

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Double Bass—Lawrence Hurst, Kurt Muroki	Tuba—Philip Sinder
Flute—Sharon Sparrow	Percussion—Nick Sakakeeny
Oboe—Linda Strommen	Harp—Joan Raeburn Holland
Clarinet—Robert Walker	

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An Evening with the World Youth Symphony Orchestra on Classical IPR

This performance of the World Youth Symphony Orchestra is recorded by Interlochen Public Radio and broadcast live on Classical IPR 88.7 FM, Interlochen; 94.7 FM, Traverse City; 88.5 FM, Mackinaw City and online at classicalipr.org. This season **An Evening with the World Youth Symphony Orchestra** starts at 7 p.m. Ahead of the live concert you can experience a half hour of treasures from the Interlochen archives, conversations with conductors and more. This concert is also webcast live and in its entirety at live.interlochen.org beginning at 7:30 p.m. (*schedule subject to change*).

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