

Sunday, September 22, 2013 at 3pm

The Eugene and Emily Grant Opening Series

Jorge Mester, conductor

Ryu Goto, violin

**LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN** (1770-1827)

*Egmont* Overture, Op.84 (1810)

**JOHANNES BRAHMS** (1833-1897)

Violin Concerto in D major, Op.77 (1878)

- I. Allegro non troppo
- II. Adagio
- III. Allegro giocoso, ma non troppo vivace

**Mr. Goto**

*Intermission*

**GEORGES BIZET** (1838-1875)

Symphony in C (1855)

- I. Allegro vivo
- II. Adagio
- III. Menuetto: Allegro vivace
- IV. Allegro vivace

*For their leading support throughout the season we are deeply grateful to Neil and Gayle Aaron, Jane and Donald Cecil, Sylvia and Leonard Marx, and Stephen Ucko.*

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**Egmont Overture, Op.84 (1810)**

**LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN**

(Born December 16, 1770 in Bonn;  
died March 26, 1827 in Vienna)

*Instrumentation: two flutes, two oboes,  
two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns,  
two trumpets, timpani and strings.*

A deeply political work, Beethoven's *Egmont* Overture was composed amid the Napoleonic Wars, shortly after the French invasion of Vienna in May of 1809. Seeking to instill a sense of pride into a people ravaged by war, Josef Härtel, director of the Viennese Hoftheater, commissioned two revivals of dramas of luminaries of the German stage — Schiller's *William Tell*, assigned to composer Adalbert Gyrowetz, and Goethe's *Egmont*.

Goethe's play tells the story of Count Egmont, a 16th-century Dutch warrior who stood up to the despotic Spanish invader, the Duke of Alba. Refusing to run away from his homeland and sacrifice his ideals of liberty, Egmont is imprisoned and sentenced to death. His wife, grief-stricken, takes her own life, and later visits him in a dream, assuring him that his death will inspire his countrymen to revolt and reclaim their liberty. Upon waking, Egmont accepts his fate and faces his execution not with fear but with a dignified resolve. Beethoven, an admirer of Goethe as much as he was a critic of Napoleon, enthusiastically accepted his assignment, viewing the drama's title character as a paragon of heroism in the face of oppression. By drawing parallels between Egmont's struggle and that of the Viennese people, Beethoven's composition is at once an exaltation of Egmont's heroism and a testament to the universality of liberty. Indeed, the overture would resurface as an anthem of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956.

A slow, somber introduction in F minor underscores the struggle; ominous block

chords on strings are answered by plaintive woodwind figures, a technique Beethoven had previously employed in his Fifth Symphony. The main body of the piece continues along these lines, the conflict between the oppressors and the oppressed represented in competing minor and major themes. Finally, as Egmont ascends to martyrdom, the Overture builds to a triumphant conclusion in a "Symphony of Victory," as Goethe had specified.

**Violin Concerto in D major, Op.77 (1878)**

**JOHANNES BRAHMS**

(Born May 7, 1833 in Hamburg;  
died April 3, 1897 in Vienna)

*Instrumentation: two flutes, two oboes,  
two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns,  
two trumpets, timpani and strings, in addition  
to the solo violin.*

At its premier in Leipzig on January 1, 1878, Brahms's Violin Concerto was met largely with bafflement. Aside from its musical complexity — one critic derided it as a "concerto versus the violin" — the piece's reception was perhaps a function of audience expectations. At nearly 45 minutes, Brahms's concerto was significantly longer than traditional concertos of the day. Moreover, many of its musical and thematic elements were, at the time, more commonly found in symphonies than in concertos. But, as is the case with many works, it has survived its inauspicious beginnings to become a concert hall staple.

The Violin Concerto is the most significant fruit borne by the lifelong friendship between Brahms and violin virtuoso Joseph Joachim. Two years Joachim's junior and just a fledgling composer when they first met in 1853, Brahms nonetheless made quite the impression on his new friend. "I have never

come across a talent like his before,” Joachim wrote. “He is miles ahead of me.” Despite their closeness and complementary talents, it was decades before the two collaborated on anything of lasting significance. Their correspondence leading up to the premier of the Violin Concerto indicates that Joachim played an important role in the development of the work, not only providing technical advice on the violin, but also editing the arrangement. Brahms, for his part, was receptive to his ideas and suggestions. In his typically self-deprecating manner, he reported, “The two middle movements have fallen through. Naturally they were the best ones. However, I have substituted a feeble *Adagio*.”

Despite Brahms’s misgivings, his “feeble *Adagio*” is anything but. A tender, lyrical melody is introduced by the oboe and taken over by the violin, providing a perfect bridge between the wistful birdsong of the opening movement *Allegro non troppo* and the playful exuberance of the *Allegro giocoso* finale.

## Symphony in C (1855)

### GEORGES BIZET

(Born October 25, 1838 in Paris;  
died June 3, 1875 in Bougival, France)

*Instrumentation: two flutes, two oboes,  
two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns,  
two trumpets, timpani and strings.*

One of a long tradition of musical wunderkinds, Georges Bizet demonstrated his compositional prowess very early on. He was admitted to the Paris Conservatory at age 9 – his skills so great that they waived their usual age minimum – and would go on to win countless prizes and honors, including the prestigious Premier Grand Prix de Rome. It was for an assignment at the Conservatory that Bizet, then 17, composed

his Symphony in C. Thinking little of his work, and feeling that it borrowed too heavily from the First Symphony of Charles Gounod, his teacher at the Conservatory, Bizet didn’t bother to find a publisher. Consequently, his symphony remained largely unknown until his biographer, D.C. Parker, discovered the original manuscript in 1935, and brought it to the attention of the conductor Felix Weingartner. Nearly 80 years after it was completed, Symphony in C was performed for the first time.

The myriad influences detectable in Symphony in C suggest that Bizet was a true student of music history. Besides the emulation of Gounod, he incorporates elements of Beethoven – particularly in the scherzos of the third movement – as well as Schubert and Mozart. He deftly blends styles: The melody of the first movement recalls the Classical period, while the harmonic colors that underscore it are more quintessentially Romantic. The slow second movement takes on the form of a fugue, in which sparse pizzicato strings accompany a haunting oboe melody, while the middle trio of the third movement employs bagpipe-like drones reminiscent of French peasant dances.

While the Symphony in C is essentially doctrinaire in its adherence to traditional symphonic structure, it is a testament to Bizet’s preternatural understanding of composition, harmonic language and music history. And in the spontaneity and vivaciousness of the final movement one can clearly hear the origins of the musical language of *Carmen*. )))

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## *Jorge Mester, conductor*

**J**orge Mester is recognized throughout the world as a preëminent conductor, renowned for the excellence and prominence he brings to every organization he leads. In July 2006, Mr. Mester was invited to return as music director of The Louisville Orchestra (KY), a position he previously held for 12 years from 1967-1979. Music director of the Pasadena Symphony for 25 years

from 1985-2010, and music director of the Naples Philharmonic from 2004-2012, Mr. Mester is also Conductor Laureate of the prestigious Aspen Music Festival, which he led as music director for 21 years from 1970-1991. He previously put his unique stamp on the Puerto Rico Festival Casals during the seven years he served as its music director beginning in the late 1970s. Mr. Mester also served as artistic director of the Young Musicians Foundation and its Debut

Orchestra for the 2011-12 season.

As the artistic director of the National Orchestral Association's New Orchestra Music Project from 1988 to 1992, he became familiar with an impressive number of American composers and had the opportunity to present many new works at Carnegie Hall. He also served as chief conductor of the West Australia Symphony Orchestra in Perth and principal guest conductor of both the Adelaide Symphony and the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra. From 1998 to 2002, he served as artistic director of the Orquesta Filarmónica de la Ciudad de México in Mexico City. As a guest conductor, Mr. Mester has traveled the world to appear with such orchestras as the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra of London, Cape Town Symphony Orchestra and the Lausanne Chamber Orchestra. He commanded worldwide attention when he conducted the opening ceremonies for the Getty Center in Los Angeles in 1997 and subsequently served as artistic director of the Center's first classical music series.

Mr. Mester's passion for opera has led him to become a sought-after conductor in opera houses worldwide, including the New York City Opera, the Sydney Opera, the Spoleto Festival and the Washington Opera in *Der Rosenkavalier*, *Cavalleria Rusticana*, *I Pagliacci*, *La Bohème*, *Le Nozze di Figaro*, *Madama Butterfly*, *Salome*, and *The Cunning Little Vixen*. He pushed the boundaries of classical music presentation through a series of original "symphonic theatre" productions incorporating classical music, dance and drama with the Pasadena Symphony. In November 2006, he led a staged operatic production of Mozart's *Don Giovanni* with the Naples Philharmonic Orchestra. The following season, he led a concert performance of *Samson and Delilah* by Camille Saint-Saëns in Louisville

as a joint-production with the Louisville Opera which was so successful that in 2008-09 both organizations collaborated to co-present Tchaikovsky's *Iolanthe*. Long an ardent champion of contemporary music, Mr. Mester has worked with dozens of gifted composers and has presented at least 75 world premieres. In 1985, he received Columbia University's prestigious Ditson Conductor's Award for the advancement of American music. Other Ditson Award recipients include Leonard Bernstein, Eugene Ormandy and Leopold Stokowski. In Mexico City, Mr. Mester programmed a 40-week festival solely featuring 20th-century music. This unique season, which devoted a month to each decade of the 20th century, was hailed as a musical "first."

Jorge Mester's recent guest-conducting engagements include Breckenridge's National Repertory Orchestra, Eastern Music Festival, Buffalo Philharmonic, Tucson Symphony, Virginia Symphony, a return to Mexico City's Orquesta Filarmónica de la Universidad Autónoma de Mexico and Orquesta Filarmónica de la Ciudad de México (for its celebratory 30th anniversary concert) and the Budapest Concert Orchestra MAV in Hungary. In the U.S., he has also conducted the orchestras of Boston, Philadelphia, Detroit, Cincinnati, Seattle, Oregon, Milwaukee and Rochester. In summer 2011, Mr. Mester led the Chautauqua Festival Orchestra in its season-opening concerts. During his 12-year tenure as music director of the Louisville Orchestra, Mr. Mester made 72 world premiere recordings with the orchestra, a prolific achievement for both conductor and orchestra. Among the composers whose works he recorded are Dmitri Shostakovich, Krzysztof Penderecki, Carlos Chavez, Frank Martin, Henry Cowell, Peter Mennin, Walter Piston, Samuel Barber, George Crumb, Leonardo

Balada and Peter Sculthorpe.

Notably, Mr. Mester's passion for conducting extends from the stage to the classroom. He served as director of the Juilliard School's Conducting Department during the early 1980s, led a series of conducting workshops for the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra and has also been a guest conductor at the USC Thornton School of Music. Says Mr. Mester, "I love teaching. I hope to pay back the help which Leonard Bernstein, Gregor Piatigorski, William Schuman and Jean Morel gave me early in my career. I want to help others the way I was helped."

Indeed, he has taught several generations of conductors, including James Conlon, Dennis Russell Davies, Andreas Delfs,

JoAnn Falletta and John Nelson. In addition, he has mentored early in their careers such internationally acclaimed artists as Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg, Midori, Renée Fleming, Cho-Liang Lin and Robert McDuffie. During his affiliation with the Aspen Music Festival, Mr. Mester helped solidify the organization's reputation for recognizing and nurturing emerging world-class musicians and fostering an exciting synergy among its distinguished faculty, acclaimed guest artists and gifted young musicians. Mr. Mester, who is of Hungarian descent, was born and raised in Mexico City and currently resides in Southern California. An accomplished violist, he performed with the Beaux-Arts Quartet for several years before focusing exclusively on conducting. )))

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## *Ryu Goto, violin*

**A**merican violinist Ryu Goto has established himself as a significant voice in classical music, with a large and growing public in Asia, North America and Europe. Mr. Goto's career began at age 7 when he made his debut at the Pacific Music Festival in Sapporo, Japan, playing Paganini's Violin Concerto No.1. Since then, Mr. Goto has appeared as a soloist with many of the world's leading orchestras and ensembles including National Symphony Orchestra, London Philharmonic, Wiener

Symphoniker, European Union Youth Orchestra, China Philharmonic Orchestra, Shanghai Symphony Orchestra and Orpheus Chamber Orchestra. He has worked with conductors including Lorin Maazel, Tan Dun, Vladimir Ashkenazy, Fabio Luisi, Myung-Whun Chung and Jonathan Nott. Ryu Goto has already performed in such prestigious venues as Carnegie Hall, the Kennedy Center, Tokyo Suntory Hall, Shanghai Grand Theater, Taipei National Concert Hall, Munich's Herkulesaal and the Musikverein in Vienna.

In the 2012-13 season, Ryu Goto made his debuts with the Hamburg Symphony and the Munich Philharmonic, Maazel conducting, followed by a tour with the orchestra to Japan. He toured to Australia and New Zealand for three weeks of performances of Tan Dun's *Hero Concerto*. This same season saw a return engagement to Columbia and Ghana, in addition to his annual solo tour of Japan, now also including performances in China.

Mr. Goto's philanthropic work includes working with student musicians throughout the world, mentoring their development, and conducting master classes in conjunction with the world's top institutions. Efforts include the "Ryu Goto Excellence In Music Initiative Scholarship" with the NYC Department of Education,

as well as collaborations with institutions like the Juilliard School and the Harvard Bach Society Orchestra.

Ryu Goto's features in media are numerous including his own Fuji TV Show "Ryu Goto's Odyssey," a chronicle of his career and personal life from 1996-2006. He also serves as spokesperson for the East Japan Railway Company with regular coverage on TV, radio and in print.

Mr. Goto records for Deutsche Grammophon in collaboration with Universal Classics Japan. In May 2011, he graduated from Harvard University with a B.A. in Physics. Mr. Goto performs on the 1715 Stradivarius, known both as the "Ex-Pierre Rode" and the "Duke of Cambridge," on loan to him from the NPO "Yellow Angel." )))

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