

*Egmont* - Incidental Music, Op.84  
Ludwig van Beethoven  
(1770-1827)

Text based on Goethe and Grillparzer by Gordon Kalton Williams

## **OVERTURE**

### **NARRATOR:**

The scene is Brussels, before the gate of the bustling city. A crossbow tournament is in progress. Soest the shopkeeper is ahead. But a latecomer joins the contest. He aims, the bowstring snaps – bulls eye! - and the crowd hails the winner. Soest the shopkeeper has been beaten at the end, but not even he will begrudge the newcomer his skill - because (listen) it is Egmont. Egmont! The name that echoes throughout this land, the hero of Gravelingen who shattered the French forces when they dared threaten our precious borders, a valorous general admired by all, yet a man like you and me, who enjoys life.

But now let us take a walk through the half-deserted streets. Evening is falling, and at an upstairs window - look! - there is Clara, the girl Count Egmont loves, to whom he secretly steals at night, his face hidden in his cloak.

But Clara knows sadness as well as joy. She is deeply in love, but cannot always be with Egmont. 'If only I were a soldier', she says. 'To be with my hero through the good times and the bad, to carry his banner in the heat of battle'.

### **NO.1 SONG: Die Trommel gerühret**

#### **CLARA**

Die Trommel gerühret!  
Das Pfeifchen gespielt!  
Mein Liebster gewaffnet ,  
Dem Haufen befiehlt,  
Die Lanze hoch führet  
Die Leute regieret  
Wie klopft mir das Herze!  
Wie wallt mir das Blut!  
O hätt ich ein Wämslein,  
Und Hosen und Hut!

Ich folgt ihm zum Tor naus  
Mit mutigem Schritt,  
Ging durch die Provinzen,  
Ging überall mit.  
Die Feinde schon weichen,  
Wir schiessen darein  
Welch Glück sondergleichen,  
Ein Mannsbild zu sein!

### **NARRATOR**

Enjoy yourself child. For already I hear an ominous hum, and from far off the roar of disaster...

## **NO.2, ZWISCHENAKT (ENTR'ACTE) 1: ANDANTE - ALLEGRO CON BRIO**

### **NARRATOR**

Egmont, listen! The truce you have struck with Spain is flawed. The disturbances in our southern provinces give Alba all the excuse he needs to invade. Granted, suppression only breeds discontent, but put them down.

But Egmont is not convinced. He heard King Phillip himself confirm their pact. Why should he be persuaded by the fears of others? [Our destiny is already decided. Invisible spirits whip up time's swift horses, away with its chariot they fly, and all we can do is take courage, hold the reins, and keep the wheels clear of the hazards around us.]

At least he knows there is a woman whose caresses can soothe his worried brow.

## **NO.3, ZWISCHENAKT 2: LARGHETTO**

### **NARRATOR**

To be joyful and sorrowful. That is our lot in life. In joyful anticipation, as evening falls, love is there waiting, in Clara's house, so near the sorrow the morning will bring.

## **NO.4, SONG: 'FREUDVOLL UND LEIDVOLL'**

### **CLARA:**

Freudvoll  
Und leidvoll  
Gedankenvoll sein,  
Langen  
Und bangen  
In schwebender Pein,  
Himmelhoch jauchzend,  
Zum Tode betrübt,  
Glücklich allein,  
Ist der Seele, die liebt.

### **NARRATOR:**

And Egmont arrives! For the last time here in his 'heaven on earth' an angel bestows upon him her blessing.

## **NO.5, ZWISCHENAKT 3: ALLEGRO**

### **NARRATOR:**

Egmont, listen! You who have loved freedom must now strive to defend it.

### **- MARCIA: VIVACE**

### **NARRATOR:**

[*Over the music*] Through the gates of Brussels has come a Spanish army - the iron duke, Alba, at its head. [*End music*]

Surrounded by Spanish lancers, Egmont lashes and flails, but it's no use protesting the liberty of his people. Only a nation of slaves serves Alba's ambitions.

Outnumbered, Egmont drops his weapon. [*CHORD*] The dungeon door slams shut.

#### **NO.6, ZWISCHENAKT 4: POCO SOSTENUTO E RISOLUTO -**

##### **NARRATOR**

Poor Clara, how can she even bear to live when her beloved is condemned? Transformed by grief, she consoles herself with vain appeals to her people's proud spirit.

##### **- ANDANTE AGITATO**

##### **NARRATOR**

It's useless. Fear grips the population. It is death even to mention Egmont's name. Despair stops Clara's heart. Time has run out.

#### **NO.7, CLARA'S DEATH: LARGHETTO** (*Highlighted text comes in during the last notes of the Larghetto*)

##### **NARRATOR**

Sweet flower, soon withered, you have no friendly bosom on which to die. In loneliness you fade. Faint, faint, glows the lamp. All grows silent. Peace, peace, for the body, for the spirit. [*End music.*]

From such sights the shocked observer craves comfort and reassurance. Where is Egmont now? In open fields where he may savour the perfumes of nature in the cool night air? No, in a cell where he breathes the evil odour of dank dungeon stones.

The conquerors read his sentence: By virtue of special powers conferred upon the Duke, we find Count Egmont guilty of high treason and order that he be put to death.

But look at the hero on the night before his execution:

#### **NO.8, MELODRAMA**

##### **EGMONT**

[*With the music*] Sweet sleep, you come like the purest of blessings, most easily when uninvited and unsought. You loosen the knots of painful thoughts, you blend all images - of joy and sorrow. You circle us with soothing harmony, and, enveloped in delightful fancies, we sink down and cease to be.

##### **NARRATOR**

The prison walls open up. There appears a vision of a heavenly woman bathed in dazzling light. Freedom it is, who draws gently near the sleeping man; who sees Clara's eyes gaze so sadly at him - the man once full of life, now so close to death. She lifts her face, so full of grief, and begs for mercy at heaven's door. But now sorrow gives way to radiant ecstasy. A joyful smile plays around Clara's lips. From her expression appears the proud confidence that Egmont's death does not mean doom, that Freedom will rise from his blood. Silently she holds out a laurel crown to the victor. His head shimmers in a supernatural light.

## EGMONT

The wreath has vanished! Oh lovely vision, the day has driven you away. Yes, it was the two of them, united, the two sweetest joys of my heart: Divine Freedom in the shape of my beloved; my beautiful young Clara in Freedom's heavenly robes. In that moment they both appeared as one - earnest but lovely. Freedom-Clara came here before me, her feet and the folds of her dress stained with blood. It was my blood and the blood of my comrades. (*DISTANT DRUMS*) No! It was not shed in vain. Onward, all you good people! The goddess of victory leads you. And like the sea breaking through our dykes, smash, sweep away, tear down the barriers of usurping tyranny.

(*DRUMS, NEARER*) Listen! Listen! How often this sound used to summon me to the field of battle and victory! How boldly my comrades strode forth to face danger. But I stride forth from this prison to face an equally honourable death. I die for the freedom for which I have lived and fought. Yes, Spain, rally your guardsmen together! Close up your ranks, you do not frighten me. I am used to standing with spears around me. And surrounded on all sides by the threat of death I feel my blood pump even harder through my veins. Friends, summon your courage. Protect your parents, wives and children. These soldiers are driven on by the hollow words of a tyrant, not by the power of their own consciences. Friends, defend what you treasure. And in saving what you love, fall gladly - (*SILENCE*) following the lead I give -

## NO.9, VICTORY SYMPHONY: ALLEGRO CON BRIO

Gordon Kalton Williams  
© Symphony Australia, 1993/2010.  
Reproduced by kind permission