

## Dramatic highlight of German classicism

Under its general music director, **Dirk Kaftan**, the **Beethoven Orchester Bonn** has made a new recording of Beethoven's incidental music for “Egmont”, op. 84, on MDG Records – with specially adapted original texts from Goethe's tragedy spoken by the popular actor **Matthias Brandt**. A highly listenable foretaste of the coming Beethoven anniversary in 2020, from the heart of the city where he was born.



### Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

Incidental music for Johann Wolfgang Goethe's tragedy Egmont op. 84  
(Texts by Tilmann Böttcher and Matthias Brandt after J. W. v. Goethe)

- [1] OVERTÜRE
- [2] IN BRÜSSEL HERRSCHT RUHE
- [3] NR. 1 DIE TROMMEL GERÜHRET! (KLÄRCHENS LIED)
- [4] FREIHEIT! EIN SCHÖNES WORT, WER'S RECHT VERSTÄNDE
- [5] NR. 2 DER ERSTE ZWISCHENAKT
- [6] DER TUMULT IST GESTILLT
- [7] NR. 3 DER ZWEITE ZWISCHENAKT
- [8] ORDNUNG UND FREIHEIT, SICHERHEIT UND RUHE
- [9] NR. 4 FREUDVOLL UND LEIDVOLL (KLÄRCHENS LIED)
- [10] NR. 5 DER DRITTE ZWISCHENAKT
- [11] KRIEG! WISST IHR AUCH, WAS IHR DA RUFT?
- [12] NR. 6 DER VIERTE ZWISCHENAKT
- [13] EGMONT VERURTEILT!
- [14] NR. 7 KLÄRCHENS TOD BEZEICHNEND
- [15] ES IST DER KLANG DER MORDAXT
- [16] NR. 8 MELODRAM
- [17] ICH HAB GETRÄUMT!
- [18] NR. 9 SIEGESSINFONIE

**Matthias Brandt** *announcer* / **Olga Bezsmertna** *soprano* / **Beethoven Orchester Bonn** | **Dirk Kaftan** *conductor*  
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The only personal meeting between Goethe and Beethoven, those two titans of German classicism, took place in July 1812 in the spa town of Teplitz (now Teplice). But this encounter between the then more than 60-year-old writer and the 41-year-old composer, who was already suffering from progressive hearing loss, was no great success – the two were simply too different in temperament and social attitudes. This did not have any detrimental effect on the respect each man had for the other as an artist, however. Goethe later said of Beethoven: “I have never seen an artist *who is* more concentrated in himself, energetic and earnest.” And the composer had also just paid profound artistic homage to the great German poet with a set of incidental music pieces: in a letter to Goethe in 1811 signed “Your Excellency's great admirer Ludwig van Beethoven”, he spoke of the “glorious Egmont, which through your agency I have thought over, felt and put to music with as much warmth as when I read it.”

The incidental music for “Egmont”, op. 84, can thus possibly be considered as the real encounter between Goethe and Beethoven, in part owing to the very special energy it generates in direct interplay with the poet's verse. Bonn's General Music Director **Dirk Kaftan**, whose declared aim is to “prove Beethoven's social relevance”, therefore felt an inner compulsion to integrate comprehensive original passages of text from the drama into this new, complete recording of the incidental music – all the more so because the play conveys timeless messages and themes that are highly relevant today, in particular with its dualisms of order/freedom, security/calm and upheaval/terror. And Beethoven's music in no way encourages the listener to lean back in relaxation, says Kaftan: “His music is not consumed as a consolation, but is experienced.”

Since the Marburg-born conductor took up the position in Bonn as of the 2017/18 season, “an appetite for new experiences has broken out that is seldom seen in connection with German symphony

orchestras,” wrote the weekly ZEIT newspaper. And that appetite is as present among members of the long-standing **Beethoven Orchester** as it is among concert-goers. Critics are equally convinced. Kaftan can do Beethoven, too, and “splendidly” at that, the daily General-Anzeiger Bonn wrote recently in its praise of the performance of the “Egmont” music, and went on to say: “The Beethoven Orchester made the music speak with its tight playing. The famous overture already had a fine resolute tone and incisiveness that led right into the midst of the drama of emotions.”

For this CD production, **Tilmann Böttcher** and the well-known TV and stage actor **Matthias Brandt**, who is also the speaker here, have created texts that draw on the original wording. They are put together in such a way that the plot of the tragedy can be easily followed and the musical numbers are coherently connected with one another. “Just as Goethe wanted moods and ideas to be taken up and developed by the music, the music here is taken up and developed by the text right into the next piece of music,” Böttcher explains. The passages of text have the following titles: All quiet in Brussels | Freedom! A lovely word if rightly understood | The tumult is calmed | Order and freedom, security and calm | War! Do you know what you are calling for? | Egmont condemned! | It is the sound of the murderous axe | I had a dream!

Apart from the overture, Beethoven's incidental music includes four Entr'actes, a Melodrama, a “Victory Symphony” for the final curtain and two songs (including the famous “Freudvoll und leidvoll” [Eng: “Joyful and Sorrowful”]) for Klärchen, Count Egmont's commoner beloved, to whom the Ukrainian soprano **Olga Bezsmertna** lends her voice on this recording. Bezsmertna, who won the “Neue Stimme” competition run by the Bertelsmann Foundation in 2011, is currently a permanent ensemble member at the Vienna Opera and much in demand on stages around the world.

Along with this select group of artists, the Beethoven Orchester here presents an exciting new recording, one that does justice to both Goethe's drama and the music of the ensemble's namesake, of which Goethe himself later said enthusiastically: “Beethoven has expressed my intentions with admirable genius.” For Dirk Kaftan, Beethoven's music anyway has a highly metamorphic effect in the concert hall: “After listening to it, musicians and audience leave the hall in a different state than when they went in.” That is something that can also occur in living rooms at home, as this freshly released CD proves – especially with such a congenial presentation of Goethe's verses. And it whets the appetite for the coming big Beethoven anniversary in 2020 as a foretaste straight from the heart of his native city.

[www.beethoven-orchester.de](http://www.beethoven-orchester.de)



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