

***LIVE FROM LINCOLN CENTER***  
**September 13, 2006, 8:00 p.m. on PBS**  
***New York Philharmonic***  
***Opening Night Concert***

"Another opening of another show." That unforgettable Cole Porter song from "Kiss Me, Kate" can well serve as the anthem for the universe of Entertainment. Every new play, film, dance, gallery exhibition, season opening brings with it the anticipation of great things to come. In New York the traditional start of the new music season is heralded by a gala New York Philharmonic opening concert. Over the years it has been the pleasure of Live From Lincoln Center to bring many of these special events into your homes by way of our cameras and microphones. And we'll be at Avery Fisher Hall again on the evening of September 13 to bring you the Philharmonic's 2006-2007 season opener. Music Director Lorin Maazel has devised what I like to call "a Mozart sandwich"---that is, music by Beethoven opens and closes the concert, and in the middle comes Mozart's Concerto in E Flat for Two Pianos. The two formidable pianists who will play the Concerto are Emanuel Ax and Yefim Bronfman. Talk about luxurious casting!

Beethoven's "Egmont" Overture begins the evening. There really was an historical figure named Egmont, a Flemish hero who was hanged in 1568 at the age of 46. The great German poet and playwright, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832), wrote a drama about Egmont and his exploits. Goethe's stage directions specify places where music should be introduced. Several composers took Goethe at his word and wrote music for the play, but all those efforts were discarded when Beethoven put his hand to the drama. Beethoven's Overture (he also composed a series of entr'actes and interludes for the play) is among his most powerful works. One of its distinguishing characteristics is its use of the horns, and that represents a link with the "Eroica" Symphony which occupies the second half of the program. More of that later. The Overture ends in a blaze of triumph, a "Symphony of Victory" as called for by Goethe: Egmont's death serves to inspire his countrymen to rise up and defeat their conquerors.

Beethoven was 10 years old when Mozart composed his only Concerto for Two Pianos. It is surmised that it was written as a vehicle for himself and his talented sister, Nannerl, shortly before he left the stultifying atmosphere of the Salzburg Court to seek his fortune and future in Vienna. The writing for the two pianos is an awesome display of invention: sometimes, as in their very first entrance, the soloists play together; at other times they interact with each other engaging in a dialogue or even interrupting one another. And the interplay with the orchestra is always a constant delight. The Concerto is in the traditional three movement format of the Classical era. The first movement is alive with themes of a generally joyous nature. The slow movement is more serious but hardly gloomy. The Finale is a rollicking Rondo, with the theme appearing no fewer than four

times, first by the orchestra, subsequently by the first piano, eventually by the second piano, and ultimately by the two pianos in duet.

The two pianists we'll hear in Mozart's Two Piano Concerto are titans of the present musical scene. Emanuel Ax has figured in several earlier Live From Lincoln Center presentations, and Yefim Bronfman has conquered audiences the world over. Interestingly, in addition to their remarkable careers as solo artists, they have in recent years begun to play together as a duet team. One can only salivate in anticipation of what awaits us when they play Mozart's Two Piano Concerto with the Philharmonic.

Beethoven's mighty "Eroica" Symphony occupies the entire second half of the concert. Paul Henry Lang, in his "Music in Western Civilization", memorably described the Symphony as "one of the most incomprehensible deeds in arts and letters, the greatest single step made by a composer in the history of the symphony and in the history of music in general." This is the work that occupied Beethoven through much of 1803 and early 1804. It was a traumatic time for the composer. In his early thirties, he was becoming increasingly tormented by what he recognized as his failing hearing. In his anguished Heiligenstadt Testament of 1802 he wrote: "I almost reached the point of putting an end to my life---only art it was that held me back, ah, it seemed impossible to leave the world until I had brought forth all that I felt called upon to produce." His Second Symphony, written precisely during the period of the Testament, may have served as a catharsis, giving him an inner peace which allowed him "to take a new road." The Third Symphony, the "Eroica" was the most monumental milestone of that "new road."

In length (the "Eroica" is about twice as long as the average Haydn or Mozart Symphony), in formal design, in complexity and in harmonic daring the Symphony does indeed set out on a new road. Much used to be made of Beethoven's original dedication of the score to Napoleon, a dedication angrily torn up when Napoleon declared himself an Emperor. Even the published dedication--"Heroic Symphony to celebrate the memory of a great man"--imposes a temporal and personal significance which the music itself far transcends. The "Eroica" is about THE heroic, about how it can liberate mankind from inward and outward oppression. This is the message of the Symphony--and of Beethoven. It is a message which sounds as a pedal point sustained throughout his entire output whether the work is the opera "Fidelio" or the "Egmont" music or the Ninth Symphony. Harking back to my earlier reference to the horns in the "Egmont" Overture, the horns have their moment in the sun in the Trio of the "Eroica" Symphony's third movement.

A "Mozart sandwich" indeed is on the menu for the evening of Wednesday, September 13: Lorin Maazel and the New York Philharmonic in music by Beethoven, with Emanuel Ax and Yefim Bronfman playing the E Flat Two Piano Concerto by Mozart! I leave you with the usual suggestion that you check your

local PBS station for the exact date and time of the telecast in your area.

Happy listening!