

Joachim Nikolas
EGGERT

Symphonies Nos. 2 and 4

Gävle Symphony Orchestra
Gérard Korsten



Joachim Nikolas Eggert (1779–1813)

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The circumstances in which public concerts in Sweden found themselves after the assassination of King Gustav III in 1792 were anything but happy, and a decline over the next decade became evident. In December of that year the *Kapellmästare* Joseph Martin Kraus, arguably Sweden's greatest composer of the eighteenth-century symphony, died shortly thereafter, and his other colleagues, Johann Friedrich Grenser and Johan David Zander, both of whom were mainstays in the public concerts, were to follow over the next four years, leaving Sweden with a dearth of capable composers. The arrival of the violinist and singer Edouard Du Puy in 1794 augured well for a revival, but in the aftermath of the political situation of 1800, both he and Abbé Vogler were forced to leave Stockholm. Therefore music in both public concerts and opera stagnated until the summer of 1803, when Joachim Nikolas Eggert (1779–1813) arrived in Sweden.

Eggert was born off the Baltic coast of Germany on the island of Rügen in the small village of Gingst on 22nd February 1779. He was the son of a cobbler and even though he displayed musical talent during his youth, it was not until the age of eleven that he began to learn music from a local performer, who believed that notes were a waste of time and one should only learn by ear. Fortunately a local organist, Johann Friedrich Dammas, took the child under his wing in 1791 and instructed him for three years in theory, violin, keyboard, and harp. Against his father's wishes, Eggert went to Stralsund in 1794 to continue his training under Friedrich Kuhlöw. In 1800 he completed his education in music composition in Braunschweig under Ferdinand Fischer and Friedrich Gottlob Fleischer and two years later was offered the post of *Kapellmeister* at the court of Mecklenburg-Schwerin. There he found circumstances less than ideal and left after only six months.

Though he contemplated giving up music during a brief sojourn at home in Gingst, he decided to travel to St Petersburg to join the Russian Imperial Chapel. A serious illness caused him to abandon his journey in Stockholm, however, where he was offered a position as a violinist.

Over the next several years his reputation as a composer spread and in 1807 he was appointed *Kapellmeister* and a member of the Royal Swedish Academy of Music. When the new monarch, Carl XIII, reorganized the establishment with the intent on returning it to its former glory in 1810, Eggert was designated to go on a grand tour. Unfortunately he fell fatally ill and died on 14th April 1813 at the home of one of his students who lived in the Swedish countryside.

Eggert was well-known for his progressive musical work. As conductor of the public concerts, he introduced Beethoven to Stockholm audiences in 1808, and over the next years performed Haydn's late oratorios and Mozart's *Magic Flute*. He was himself lauded for his music for the plays *The Moors in Spain* and *Svante Sture*, as well as his chamber music; nine of his ten quartets were published and critically acclaimed throughout Europe. His most innovative works, however, were his four symphonies — the fifth was left unfinished at his death — representing the epitome of the Swedish symphony between Kraus and Franz Berwald. He also collaborated with his pupil Erik Drake in gathering one of the first collections of Swedish folk-music.

The *Symphony in G minor* was probably written during 1806 and was intended to be performed in December of that year but Eggert withdrew it for lack of trumpet players; the work calls for a trio instead of the usual pair. It was apparently given its première a few months later. The score bears a dedication to Adolf Fredrik Skjöldebrand, who was governor general of Stockholm, later Intendant of the Royal Spectacles, and an amateur composer himself (a current notion that this work ought to be subtitled "Skjöldebrand" is untenable, given that this is only a dedication and not a characteristic of the work). The four movements call for substantial orchestral forces, and yet Eggert takes great care not to overuse them in waves of sound. Indeed, the opening introduction is almost simple and hymn-like with a gentle major key bassoon solo that develops over a substantial length of time. G minor arrives with rolling timpani and a powerful *Sturm und Drang* theme that quickly moves to the relative major and a lively theme that sounds

right out of Schubert in that it is tossed back and forth among the various wind instruments and strings. This is reiterated at its return in the last section in a major key, completely diffusing the minor key stormy mood. The second movement is a theme and variations that begins with a languid horn theme that evokes the deep German forests of Carl Maria von Weber in its folk-song qualities, followed by a repeat in the ethereal flutes. The third variation, however, suddenly turns to the minor with relentless and powerful brass chords (and several contrasting major key interludes that inject a sense of peace into the intense variation). Afterwards, spent and calm, it ends as softly as it began. The third movement has a flowing theme with the minuet metre not immediately apparent; it is restless and mysterious, rising only to a peak before the return of the theme and it ends with a brief timpani tattoo. The trio has a steady brass gait like an Imperial march. The finale is a huge sonata-form movement that incorporates Eggert's penchant for long lyrical lines and internal variation. The rhythmic motion is lively and jaunty, with broad orchestral sweeps of sound that eventually wind up in the major key and a brilliant finish that foreshadows Schubert.

The *Symphony in C minor* was probably composed about 1810 as Eggert settled in to the new regime under Carl XIII after a disastrous war and the abdication of Gustav IV Adolph. It appears to have been given its première either the following year or in 1812, just before Eggert set off on his fatal journey south. It was about this year that Breitkopf published the symphony, possibly in advance of the composer's arrival in Germany and elsewhere. The opening powerful chords outline a solemn steady march, indeed, almost funereal that dissolves into a mysterious, tension-filled *Allegro* with a nicely Schubertian second theme, varied at times with transparent orchestration. Cascades of strings and winds lead into an expansive development of new thematic material. This too dissolves into interplay between the winds before the entire movement ends with a powerful coda in C major replete with full percussion. The second movement features an idyllic pastorella with flutes in their lower register above a flowing clarinet line. The lyrical line evokes a sense of peace and tranquility, only to be

interrupted by booming drums like distant cannon and a unison military theme which becomes harsh and implacable. The peaceful main theme attempts to re-establish itself, but variations on the military tune overwhelm it with trumpet calls and a swirling countermelody on strings. Finally a cavalry charge occurs with clashing cymbals and drums, only to fade away into the languid opening theme that gradually fades into the distance. The minuet is quite Haydnesque, with a steady theme that is spun out sequentially before moving into a lilting *Ländler* in the trio. The finale is based upon a unison brass motive that devolves into a round dance in the major key that seems joyous, with motives bouncing back and forth between the strings and winds. The entire central section is a complex fugue and the ending fades into the background before three final powerful chords. It has been said that Eggert wrote a symphony entitled "War and Peace", and although it is not certain which of the four this was, a strong case can be made for this last completed work, for nowhere else in his oeuvre is there such a harsh depiction of military drama as in the second movement.

The alternative slow movement to the *Fourth Symphony* is one of the most powerful and progressive works among Eggert's compositions. In F minor, it begins sparingly with a solo horn, soon joined by a second in an arabesque that wanders about creating dissonances that seem almost Wagnerian. The duet concludes with an unanswered question that fades away before the strings enter with a lyrical line that evokes Kraus, to which the occasional wind solo provides a contrast that seems as if out of Mendelssohn or Brahms. A full orchestra section heightens the intensity before the solo horn returns for a plaintive farewell. While it cannot be determined if this or its F major counterpart came first, the unusual sound and orchestration of this movement points the way to a future that Eggert, unfortunately, did not live to see. Indeed, in his last work, the unfinished *Symphony No. 5 in D minor*, he managed only to write as far as the beginning of the exposition, but the slow introduction, with twenty bars of a low D and rest in the double basses and nothing else, points to a continuation of this progressive and dramatic style evoked in this brief movement.

Joachim Nicholas Eggert should be seen today as one of the more progressive symphonic composers of his age. His works, though few in number, demonstrate a forward-thinking compositional skill that, had he lived longer, might

have competed with his German and Austrian colleagues in pointing the way to the future of the symphony in the nineteenth century.

A Note on the Numbering of Eggert's Symphonies

Although Eggert wrote only four symphonies, with a fifth incomplete beyond the exposition of the first movement, the numbering of these has varied considerably since work was begun on them by Stig Walin in 1942. Various proposals based upon a fluid composition history have been proposed by a number of scholars, including the present author (in 1983 in the series *The Symphony 1720–1830*). The current numbering is expected to be the final one, given that documentary research into the dates of composition,

particularly by the late Avishai Kallai, has left little doubt as to their order. Accordingly, the two disc première recordings of all four works reflect this latest and final order. The only changes that might be forthcoming is if another symphony (or possibly more than one) dating from the period prior to his arrival in Sweden come to light in the future. In any case these would be analogous to Beethoven, whose canon of nine symphonies is vouchsafed, though his official first was written only about the age of thirty.

Bertil van Boer

Gérard Korsten

Born in South Africa, Gérard Korsten began his career as a violinist, after studying with Ivan Galamian at the Curtis Institute and with Sándor Végh in Salzburg. Following his studies in the United States and Europe, he became Concertmaster and Assistant Music Director of the Camerata Salzburg and later Concertmaster of the Chamber Orchestra of Europe (1987-1996). In 2005 he was appointed Principal Conductor of the Symphonieorchester Vorarlberg, Bregenz. His past engagements include concerts with the Budapest Festival, Leipzig Gewandhaus, BBC Scottish Symphony, Swedish Radio Symphony, and Gävle Symphony Orchestras, and he has appeared at many notable opera houses, including La Scala Milan, Royal Swedish Opera and English National Opera. Featured among Gérard Korsten's many recordings are Tchaikovsky's *Serenade* and *Souvenir de Florence* with the Chamber Orchestra of Europe on Deutsche Grammophon and a DVD of *Le nozze di Figaro* at La Scala Milan, which was awarded a Diapason d'Or and was Critic's Choice in *Opera News*.

Photo: Marco Borggreve





Gävle Symphony Orchestra

The Gävle Symphony Orchestra is one of the oldest in Sweden, and celebrated its 100th anniversary in 2012. The conductor and composer Ruben Liljefors was the orchestra's first artistic director, with 25 musicians at his disposal. Over the years, the orchestra has grown to 52 full-time members. Based chiefly at the Gävle Concert Hall, the orchestra tours regularly, both in its home province and elsewhere in Sweden, Scandinavia and the rest of Europe. Since its inception, the Gävle Symphony Orchestra has had a succession of distinguished principal conductors, including Stig Westerberg, Rainer Miedel, Göran W. Nilson, Hannu Koivula, Carlos Spierer, Petri Sakari and Robin Ticciati. The Spanish conductor Jaime Martín has been the orchestra's principal conductor and artistic leader since 2013. Since 1998 the orchestra's home has been the Gävle Concert Hall, regarded as one of Sweden's best, where the excellent acoustics are preferred by the orchestra, guest artists and ensembles making recordings. The orchestra's discography lists recordings of works by composers Bo Linde, Wilhelm Stenhammar, Franz Berwald, Hugo Alfvén, Edvard Grieg, Dmitry Shostakovich, Carl Nielsen and Sven-David Sandström.

Photo: Frank Julin

One of the more forward-looking Swedish composers and conductors of his age, Eggert died before achieving wider European recognition and has remained neglected ever since. The *Second Symphony* evokes moods both stormy and lyrical, revealing a technical brilliance that foreshadows Schubert. The *Fourth Symphony* reflects the military backdrop to the political unrest of the times, its alternative slow movement being one of Eggert's most powerful and progressive works. Symphonies *Nos. 1* and *3* can be heard on Naxos 8.572457.

**Joachim Nikolas
EGGERT**
(1779–1813)

Symphony No. 4 in C minor (c. 1810)	29:23
1 I. Adagio – Allegro assai	11:52
2 II. Adagio	6:39
3 III. Minuet and Trio	2:45
4 IV. Fugue: Allegro con spirito	7:59
5 Alternative Second Movement to Symphony No. 4: Largo	4:26
Symphony No. 2 in G minor (1806)	31:23
6 I. Adagio – Allegro con brio	10:40
7 II. Andante	7:23
8 III. Minuet and Trio: Allegretto	4:14
9 IV. Finale: Allegro	9:01

ALL WORLD PREMIÈRE RECORDINGS

**Gävle Symphony Orchestra
Gérard Korsten**

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Playing Time
65:26



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