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Photo credit: Owen Zhou.

Chamber Orchestra

Eroica!

Gary Lewis, conductor

Thursday, Oct. 23, 2025, 7:30 p.m.

Grusin Music Hall

PROGRAM

Siegfried Idyll

Richard Wagner (1813-1883)

Intermission

Symphony No. 3 in E-flat Major, Op. 55, “Eroica”

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

- I. Allegro con brio
- II. Marcia funebre; Adagio assai
- III. Scherzo: Allegro vivace
- IV. Finale: Allegro molto

PROGRAM NOTES

Siegfried Idyll

Richard Wagner (1813-1883)

On Christmas morning in 1870, in the small Swiss villa of Tribschen overlooking Lake Lucerne, Richard Wagner presented his wife Cosima with one of the most intimate and touching musical gifts ever conceived—the *Siegfried Idyll*. It was written to celebrate both her 33rd birthday and the birth of their son, Siegfried, and it was performed by a small ensemble quietly assembled on the staircase outside her bedroom. Cosima recorded in her diary: “As I awoke, my ear caught a sound which grew fuller and fuller. Music was sounding, and what music! After it had died away, Richard came in with the five children and put into my hands the score of his symphonic birthday greeting.

Though Wagner is best known for his monumental operas and vast orchestral forces, the *Siegfried Idyll* reveals an entirely different side of him—tender, lyrical and domestic. Scored originally for just 13 players (strings, woodwinds and brass), it is a work of chamber-like intimacy. Wagner later expanded it slightly for publication, but its essence remains private and personal.

Much of the musical material in the *Idyll* is drawn from the *Siegfried* opera, the third part of Wagner’s *Ring* cycle. In particular, the serene opening melody corresponds to the theme associated with Brünnhilde’s awakening in the opera’s final act — a gesture of love and rebirth. But Wagner did not intend the *Idyll* as a public prelude to his epic; rather, these borrowed themes carried private meanings for the family, evoking lullabies, affectionate motifs and even birdsong that filled their home life.

The music unfolds in a single continuous movement, beginning with a radiant sunrise of sound and developing through tender dialogues, gentle climaxes and dreamlike recollections. The atmosphere is one of profound peace—a rare glimpse into the composer’s personal happiness during an otherwise turbulent life. Ultimately, the *Siegfried Idyll* stands as Wagner’s most heartfelt and human creation: a love letter in sound, filled with warmth, gratitude and quiet joy.

Symphony No. 3 in E-flat Major, Op. 55, “Eroica”

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

When Ludwig van Beethoven completed his Symphony No. 3, he changed the course of Western music. The “Eroica” (Heroic) Symphony, as it came to be known, shattered every expectation of what a symphony could be—its scale, emotional range and revolutionary spirit all marked a new chapter in musical history.

Beethoven began composing the work in 1803, during a turbulent period of his life. He was in his early thirties, confronting the first signs of deafness, yet filled with creative fire. Originally, Beethoven intended to dedicate the symphony to Napoleon Bonaparte, whom he admired as a symbol of freedom and the democratic ideals of the French Revolution. But when Napoleon crowned himself Emperor in 1804, Beethoven’s admiration turned to fury. He famously tore the title page in half, declaring that Napoleon was now “a tyrant.” The symphony was published simply as “Sinfonia eroica, composed to celebrate the memory of a great man.”

From its very first notes, the “Eroica” breaks the mold. The opening movement, vast in scope and symphonic power, unfolds with bold harmonic surprises, rhythmic vitality, and emotional volatility. The second movement, a Funeral March, is one of Beethoven’s most profound creations—a noble, grief-stricken procession that builds to an overwhelming climax before fading into quiet resignation. The *Scherzo* that follows bursts forth with renewed energy and life, its rhythmic drive and horn calls signaling triumph over despair.

The *Finale*, a set of variations on a theme Beethoven had used in earlier works, represents the symphony’s crowning vision: a celebration of creativity itself. Through its transformations—by turns playful, grand, and jubilant—the theme becomes a metaphor for human resilience and renewal.

Beethoven’s “Eroica” marked a defining moment in music history. It expanded the symphony from a refined classical form into a medium for personal expression and philosophical depth. In its daring length, emotional scope, and heroic vision, the “Eroica” stands as a testament to the power of art to capture the struggle and triumph of the human spirit.

CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

Violin

Kristen Barrett *
Eliot Bevier Dill
Michael Han
Kiera Larson
Sidney Lofthouse
Leo Matsuoka
Jaithan McEchron
Katharine Nelson
Laura Perez-Rangel
Andrew Storey
Ginevra Strasser
Nano Takeda
Emilie Tupper
Adam Weller
Dana Wolpe
Daniel Yu +

Viola

Shelley Armer *
Walt Conte *
Jacob Geels
Aaron Lockhart
Aimée McAnulty
Ryan Nguyen
Kenji Sor
Finn Wooton
Xi Xin

Isabella Zak

Jacie Zou

Cello

Mackenzie Baca
Leah Everling
Kate Fornshell
Priscilla Kim *
Matt Huff *
Logan Kuhlman
Sam Moore
Ben Nelson
Everlin Roark
Caleb Seifert
Cole Sutherland

Double Bass

Gabriel Brownlowe
Owen Crofton
Andrew Delker
Asher Dobrin
Claire Koch
Sasha Mackoff
Sasha Nepomnyashy *
John St. Cyr *

Flute

Aria Hensen
Mallory Wood

Timpani

Hank Sullivan

Oboe

Eirian Austeorrian
Lauren Breen
Grace Stringfellow

Clarinet

John Petefish
Paige Scott
Juan Tovar-Vargas

Bassoon

Ben Mangonon
Grace Moon

Horn

Aurora Conroy
Stacey DeGarmo
Susannah Greenslit
Sophie Steger

Trumpet

Sydney Hoehl
Leilani Spurlock
Katherine Votruba

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*Photos: On this page, University Chorus, Fall 2024.
Photo credit: Erika O'Connor; On the cover, Cross-
Genre Ensemble, 2025. Photo credit: Owen Zhou.*

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*The Drowsy Chaperone (2023).
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