**Program Notes**

**Egmont Overture, Op. 84**

*Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)*

Beethoven’s *Egmont Overture* is the powerful opening to a set of incidental music pieces he composed for Goethe’s play *Egmont*, a historical drama about Count Egmont’s struggle for freedom against Spanish oppression in 16th-century Flanders. The overture encapsulates the defiance and ultimate martyrdom of its hero, whose death sparks a revolution.

From the slow, ominous opening chords—suggesting the weight of oppression—to the electrifying Allegro that follows, Beethoven masterfully captures the emotional arc of Egmont’s journey. The overture’s final, triumphant coda represents the hope of liberation, aligning closely with Beethoven’s own lifelong belief in justice and human freedom. Written between 1809 and 1810, as Napoleon’s forces occupied Vienna, the music also reflects Beethoven’s personal connection to the themes of resistance and courage in the face of tyranny. This overture is both a thrilling standalone concert piece and a stirring testament to the enduring power of individual bravery in the fight for freedom.

**Trail of Tears**Michael Daugherty (1954)

*Trail of Tears* (2010) for flute and orchestra was commissioned by a consortium consisting of the American Composers Orchestra, Ann Arbor Symphony Orchestra, Delaware Symphony Orchestra, Omaha Symphony and Tupelo Symphony. The world premiere was given by the Omaha Symphony under the direction of Thomas Wilkins, with Amy Porter, solo flute, at the Holland County Performing Arts Center, Omaha, Nebraska on March 25, 2010. It is scored for solo flute, two horns, two trumpets, timpani, percussion, harp and strings. Duration is approximately 22 minutes.

The composer writes:

“One of the tragedies of human history is the forced removal of peoples from their homeland for political, economic, racial, religious, or cultural reasons. In America, the forced removal of all Native Americans living east of the Mississippi River began with the passage of President Andrew Jackson’s Indian Removal Act of 1830. In 1838, 15,000 Cherokee men, women, and children were forcefully taken from their homes by the U.S Army and placed in stockades and camps in Tennessee. From November 1838 to March 1839, the Cherokee, with scant clothing and many without shoes, were forced to make an 800-mile march for relocation in Oklahoma during the bitter cold of winter. Suffering from exposure, disease, and starvation, nearly 4,000 Cherokee died during the five-month march known as the “Trail of Tears.”

My flute concerto is a musical journey into how the human spirit discovers ways to deal with upheaval, adversity and adapting to a new environment. The first movement reflects on meaningful memories of things past, inspired by a quotation from the Native American leader, Geronimo (1829-1909): “I was born on the prairies where the wind blew free and there was nothing to break the light of the sun.” The second movement, entitled “incantation,” meditates on the passing of loved ones and the hope for a better life in the world beyond. The third and final movement, “sun dance,” evokes the most spectacular and important religious dance ceremony of the Plains Indians of 19th-century North America. Banned for a century by the U.S. government, the dance is now practiced again today. I have composed a fiery musical dance to suggest how reconnecting with rituals of the past might create a path to a new and brighter future.”

-Michael Daugherty

**Wave (Lawner Prize Composition)**

Snow Kim

Wave is inspired by the serene and timeless beauty of an ocean wave. This piece reflects the ebb and flow of the sea, evoking the quiet calm of the water as it glistens under the sunlight. The wave carries with it a sense of nostalgia—moments when the sight of the sea stirs memories.

-Snow Kim

**March Slav, Op. 31**

*Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893)*

Tchaikovsky’s *March Slav* was composed in 1876 as a rousing call to arms and solidarity for a benefit concert aiding Serbian soldiers wounded in their fight against the Ottoman Empire. The piece was commissioned by the Russian Musical Society, with Tchaikovsky tasked to create something both patriotic and stirring, a task he completed in just a few weeks.

Blending traditional Serbian folk songs with the grandeur of Russian imperial music, *March Slav* brilliantly contrasts a somber opening—reflecting the plight of the Serbians—with increasingly energetic and triumphant themes, embodying the Russian people’s spirit of solidarity. Tchaikovsky weaves in the Russian national anthem, *God Save the Tsar*, building to a thrilling climax. The music portrays struggle, perseverance, and ultimate victory, qualities that resonate universally, making this march a favorite in concert halls today.

Though it was written for a specific historical moment, *March Slav* transcends its original purpose to speak to themes of unity and national pride, packed with Tchaikovsky’s trademark emotional intensity.