



KEYNOTES

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF
THE EVANSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

LAWRENCE ECKERLING, MUSIC DIRECTOR

Moving Movie Music

Enjoy the magic of the movies at our next concert on April 7, featuring works by John Williams, Ennio Morricone, Samuel Barber, and George Gershwin. WFMT's LaRob K. Rafael will narrate George S. Clinton's *The Rose of Sonora*, featuring Holly Mulcahy on violin. Clinton will also be in attendance.

John Williams (b. 1932) started composing scores in 1958, and 14 years later, he wrote the score for the John Wayne movie *The Cowboys*. In the overture, Williams expertly captures the excitement of wild horses and the wide-open frontier. The merriment around the campfire is contrasted against the loneliness of the open range.

Ennio Morricone (1928–2020) wrote more than 400 scores in his lifetime. In 1988, he wrote the lyrical score for "Cinema Paradiso," which has become one of the most recognizable in movie music history. A hauntingly beautiful oboe theme has become one of Morricone's most iconic compositions and is instantly recognizable to fans of the film. Another standout from the score is "Love Theme for Nata," featuring a romantic, soaring violin solo.

The Rose of Sonora by George S. Clinton (b. 1947) tells the story of Rose in five scenes (movements). This Western-style violin concerto's outlaw cowgirl is portrayed by the violin solo performed by Holly Mulcahy.

Clinton was inspired by the true stories about the women in the Old West and created *The Rose of Sonora* starring a heroine. He wanted to create an interactive experience for the audience. As such, descriptions of each scene are read by a narrator (WFMT's LaRob K. Rafael) to help the audience create a mental movie of this epic Western adventure of love, loss, and revenge. A male chorus (Allegrezza singers) is also featured in the piece.


SUNDAY, APRIL 7

— 2:30 PM

MOVING
MOVIE MUSIC



Samuel Barber's (1910–1981) *Adagio for Strings* is a musical gem that has resonated with audiences for decades. *Adagio for Strings* can be heard on many film and television soundtracks, including *The Elephant Man*, *Platoon*, and *Lorenzo's Oil*. More comedic or lighthearted uses of it have appeared in the film "Amélie."

George Gershwin (1898–1937) based *An American in Paris* on a melodic fragment called "Very Parisienne," written in 1926. Gershwin called it "a rhapsodic ballet," and it's written in a much more modern idiom than his prior works. Gershwin explained in *Musical America*, "My purpose here is to portray the impressions of an American visitor in Paris as he strolls about the city, listens to the various street noises, and absorbs the French atmosphere." 



MUSICAL INSIGHTS

FRIDAY, APRIL 5, 2024

1:30 PM

FREE

OPEN TO THE
PUBLIC

MEET HOLLY MULCAHY
AND COMPOSER
GEORGE S. CLINTON

1611 CHICAGO AVE., EVANSTON
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This program is partially supported by a grant from the Illinois Arts Council through federal funds provided by the National Endowment for the Arts.



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BEHIND THE SCENES



This concert is what I call the “outside the box” concert. We will present music that was either written for the movies, inspired by the movies, or famously utilized in the movies. One of the centerpieces of the concert is a work by film composer George S.

Clinton entitled *The Rose of Sonora*. It is a violin concerto “In Five Scenes” (not in five “movements”). A narrator will give you a general outline preceding each “scene,” but then it is up to the listener to use their imagination and individually fill in the specific details based on the music they hear. Virtuoso violinist Holly Mulcahy commissioned the work and will take up the violin solo duties, and WFMT’s LaRob K. Rafael will be host and narrator.

Another centerpiece of the concert is Gershwin’s *An American in Paris*, which inspired a movie by the same name (and included the Gershwin piece as a ballet within the movie.) There has been a fascinating discovery, or reevaluation, about the pitches of the famous taxi horns in the piece. Gershwin indicated the letters a, b, c, and d for

the different taxi horns. For the longest time it was usually accepted that the composer meant for those to be the pitches for the taxi horns. But through research and discovery, it is now believed that those letters did not signify a particular musical pitch, but rather which horn to blow. The Evanston Symphony will use the different horn pitches for these performances. The taxi horns might sound different than you are used to on your favorite recording, but they will still be there for you to enjoy!

Finally, I think in the past film music has not received the respect that it deserves. Unfortunately, some people considered film music to be second rate and unworthy of the concert hall. Nothing could be further from the truth. Not only does it have a place in the concert hall, it should be considered right alongside any other kind of music. Great composers have composed for movies, and they have written great music. I’m reminded of a quote by Duke Ellington: “If it sounds good, and feels good, than it IS good!” 🎧

—Lawrence Eckerling

Music Director, Evanston Symphony Orchestra

Musical Insights is generously sponsored by The Merion.

We appreciate their continuing support. Please read about what The Merion has to offer.



Evanston’s premier senior living community, The Merion, offers active older adults the opportunity to retire in style. Situated in vibrant downtown Evanston, and only a few blocks from Lake Michigan, The Merion allows seniors to enjoy the best of what our area offers right outside their door—all while delighting in a truly worry-free rental lifestyle within our community.

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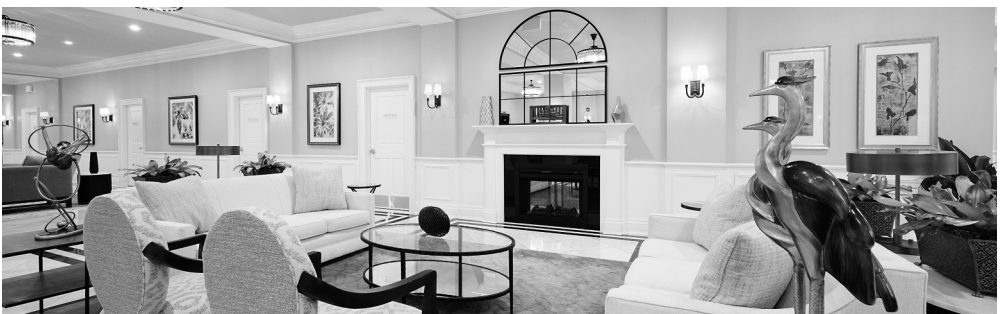
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Call 847-562-5318 or visit MerionEvanston.com to schedule a tour and learn more about The Merion. 🎧



THE MERION



Holly Mulcahy: Demystifying Classical Music



Denver native Holly Mulcahy says that her parents weren't particularly musical (although her mother plays the Native American wooden flute). However, she and her brother, Craig, somehow managed to have a longer dip in the musical end of the gene pool: Holly is Concertmaster of the Wichita Symphony Orchestra and Craig is Principal Trombonist of the National Symphony Orchestra in Washington, DC.

Holly credits her fourth grade music teacher for sparking her interest in music. "I grew up in an era of Disney Princesses," she said, "but they were all the "come-help-me, come-save-me" types. Then one day my teacher played a recording of Rimsky-Korsakov's *Scheherazade*, and there was this princess telling her own strong story in her own strong voice. I was hooked!" And since Scheherazade's voice was that of the violin, ten-year-old Holly chose it as her instrument. She later received both her BA and her MA at Johns Hopkins University's Peabody Institute in Baltimore (You can read more about her formal training, career path and other interesting activities on her website: HollyMulcahy.com.)

Many of Holly's music-related activities are geared toward removing the mystique from classical music, the idea that it is somehow beyond the reach of ordinary mortals. "Music is a story-telling device and always writes its own stories—but there are no *wrong* answers when listening to music. What you feel is the *right* answer!" In all her public interactions, Holly embodies this idea in what she calls a "Yes. And..." approach, never one that says "No because..."

With this philosophy in mind, Holly has taken on an extra role at the Wichita Symphony Orchestra as their Partner for Audience Engagement, a position the WSO describes as "dedicated to building meaningful relationships with audiences by breaking down stereotypical barriers." In this role, Holly and other orchestra members meet with audience members on an informal basis, whether over coffee or for a walk in a park, and talk about anything they'd like; music is not a mandatory topic! Holly says it gives orchestra musicians "a chance to be themselves." For audience members, it's a chance to see the person under all of that formidable musical talent.

A chance encounter at a symphony gala in 2016 led Holly down another path toward her goal of demystifying classical music — but this path is inside prison walls. Two of her fellow gala guests worked with a prison ministry and Holly soon found herself presenting a music program for inmates at Walker Faith and Character Based State Prison in Georgia. A short time later, Holly's not-for-profit organization, Arts Capacity, was born.

Continuing with this idea that there are no wrong answers in music, Holly writes that Arts Capacity "deliberately refrains from providing extensive program notes or historical

information. Instead, we extend an invitation for residents of the prison to interpret the music as they see fit, allowing their imaginations to roam freely to meet their emotions on the deepest level. ...We've found that this approach fosters curiosity and offers a deeper sense of ownership and agency within the prison walls. It also serves as a platform for prisoners to share their musical interpretations, which encourages community building and empathy." Holly also makes it a point to invite living American composers to perform and discuss their works in the prison setting. The reaction of the prisoners has been extremely positive. "The violin recital gives me peace, it helps me cope with everyday life," wrote one, while another said, "The special thing about music to me is that it invades your privacy without permission to arouse your spirits. The ability to witness the beauty of living composers. I've been in 27 years and this is awesome."

Holly's interest in working with contemporary American composers has let her develop another of her areas of interest: movie music, which she thinks has been underrated for far too long. And this leads us to *The Rose of Sonora*, the main feature of our April 7th concert. Holly had met George Clinton, a major film industry composer, while she was concertmaster of the Chattanooga Symphony and Clinton was co-producing a film music festival with the orchestra. "We hit it off immediately," Clinton recalls, "and I have been a big fan ever since. When she approached me... to compose a concerto for her, but in the style of an epic Western, I knew we were kindred spirits."

Once he accepted Holly's commission, Clinton had to make one adjustment immediately: for the first time in his career, it was up to him to create the script before he could write the music. With this in mind, Clinton delved into the stories of the bad girls of the Old West, the outlaws. Among them were "Big Nose Kate," girlfriend of Doc Holliday of the Gunfight at the O.K. Corral; "Squirrel Tooth Alice," one of the most infamous madams of the Old West; and "Rose of Cimarron," girlfriend of one of the "Wild Bunch" gang members.

From these women and others Clinton distilled the story of "The Rose of Sonora," a violin concerto in five "scenes," which Holly describes as "escape, young love, surprise and remorse, gutting sadness, and satisfying revenge." Clinton notes that "[o]ne of the features of the solo violin part is the merging of traditional fiddle technique with classic violin technique, giving the main character, Rose, her voice."

Joining Holly on stage for this performance as host and narrator is WFMT's LaRob K. Rafael, who will give a description of what is happening prior to each scene. "Inspired by the scene descriptions and the music they are hearing, by the end of the concerto, each member of the audience will have created his or her own 'mental movie' of *The Rose Of Sonora*." Saddle up! 🎻

—Kelly Brest van Kempen

What Does the Conductor Do?

In light of recent movies *Tár* and *Maestro* that feature conductors, I have recently had many questions about what a conductor actually does. So I will try to address this now.

Overall, the conductor defines the concept of the piece of music at hand. Then, he or she uses physical gestures to portray this to the ensemble so that, when they play, that concept transmits to the listener. While achieving this, the conductor sets a tempo, indicates where the beats are, assists the players with entrances, reminds them of how fast or slow they are to play, shows them the emotional content of the music, and looks at certain players when necessary to achieve those results.

The conductor also knows that music “unfolds” over the course of time. And everything that happens must be an inevitable result of what happened just before it, always on its journey to its final destination.

The conductor helps with the conditions so that players can play their best while matching up to the initial concept. For example, if a flute solo occurs, the conductor must make sure that everyone else around the flutist is playing at a loudness (or softness) that enables the flute player to shine. It might mean adjusting dynamics, or it might mean slightly adjusting a tempo, even if briefly.

The hardest thing to grasp is that a conductor MUST have a deep foundation as a musician long before they even think of picking up a baton. Finding the right analogy is tough. You have to already have had experience as a performer, not only technically, but also learning to breathe the way music breathes. You already have to know how certain harmonies and certain manipulations of time affect the emotional response music has on a human listener. Analogy? I don't think you can learn to be a race car driver until you have learned to drive a car. I don't think you can be a fighter pilot until you first know how to fly an airplane. I don't think you can be a good judge until you are first a lawyer who has studied the law and knows it thoroughly. I don't think you can be a chef in a prestigious French restaurant if you have never cooked basic foods in your home first.

It is why Gilbert Kaplan, a famous, wealthy procurer and proponent of Mahler's music, could not be a conducting expert JUST on Mahler's 2nd Symphony. It's why Cate Blanchet in *Tár* (despite declarations to the contrary) did NOT “do her own conducting,” despite “months of training.” No, she is an actor, and she portrayed a conductor. It is why Bradley Cooper in *Maestro* did NOT “do his own conducting” for five minutes of music in Mahler's 2nd Symphony, despite “months of training” with a renown conductor. He is an actor, and he portrayed a conductor.

Now, it IS possible to actually “do your own conducting” with only some few months of training. That is when you are already a trained musician that already possesses that foundation or, in very rare circumstances, when your musicality is SO innate that you explode with musical talent. A lot of the required foundation is already embedded in that individual even though they might not actually be a musician. One such person I can think of was Danny Kaye. He was an actor and a comedian, but he actually conducted remarkably well. Just ask members of the New York Philharmonic who played under him. He didn't conduct like he had years of experience as a conductor — after all, he didn't read music and learned his music exclusively from what he had heard on recordings, etc. — but he did have that innate musical ability.

Finally, there is nothing wrong with being an actor that studies for their role so that they can play a conductor. But make no mistake. If such a person is “conducting,” the players in the orchestra in front of them know very well what is REALLY going on, and they will play well despite what gestures the actors are showing to the orchestra. After all, they are paid to sound good, and sound good they will. It's okay to be just an actor portraying a conductor. That's enough to be proud of. Really. 🎧

—Lawrence Eckerling
Music Director, Evanston Symphony Orchestra



Musical Insights

A free pre-concert event at The Merion

Friday, April 5, 1:30 PM

Enhance your concert experience with a sneak preview. Composers come alive and their passions take center stage when Maestro Lawrence Eckerling takes you on an insider's tour of the history and highlights behind the music.



Meet Holly Mulcahy, violin, who will be playing *The Rose of Sonora* in our concert on April 7. Also, a special appearance by George S. Clinton, the composer of *The Rose of Sonora*. 🎧

In Memoriam: Jim Berger

With sadness, we announce that Jim Berger, a big fan of the ESO, passed away on January 29th, 2024. Jim was a long time subscriber to the ESO and also served


two terms on the ESO board. His daughter, Liza, is one of our viola players. We send our condolences to his family. 🎧

Celebrate the Evanston Symphony Orchestra in its 77th Season with your gift to the 2024 Annual Fund!

The ESO is proud of its commitment to quality performances, engagement with community partners and outreach to Evanston’s youngest, most vulnerable students and also seniors. We make live classical concerts accessible to all and enrich people’s lives with music! In the past year, we have performed two free concerts, as well as five regular concerts. Last August we presented a free outdoor concert at The Wallace Bowl in Gillson Park which attracted a crowd of over 1,200. And just this March we performed a free Young Persons’ concert to a packed audience. For the finale of the concert 200 students from District 65 came and played side-by-side with ESO string musicians. Alyson Berger, orchestra teacher from Chute Middle School, said: “We are so grateful to the Evanston Symphony for giving our District 65 Orchestra students the opportunity to perform alongside their talented musicians on this Young Persons’ Concert. Our students will experience how performing music can be a lifelong journey through this community building experience.”

We know the value of music education for young students. All our orchestra musicians were young musicians once. We bring free music education classes to 400 pre-kindergarten students at District 65’s Joseph E. Hill Building, from 6 months old to 4 years. These low-income young students sing, move, learn musical language, and play instruments throughout the school year, thanks to generous donations from you, and others in our community. And when these young people start coming to concerts, we give them *KidNotes*, program notes designed specially for young audience members.

The ESO is a true community orchestra that touches the hearts and minds of people from 2 to 102! We hope that you share our pride in the many contributions our orchestra has made to our community. Please consider a tax deductible gift to the Evanston Symphony Orchestra’s 2024 Annual Fund.

Thank you! 

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