



KEYNOTES

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF
THE EVANSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

LAWRENCE ECKERLING, MUSIC DIRECTOR

Romantic Masterpieces

The Sunday, March 22 concert of the Evanston Symphony offers an aural travelogue of Romantic Europe with three masterpieces of illustrative music. Our three composers, born within a span of ten years, knew each other's music as well as each other personally. All three conducted orchestras and wrote extensively.



CHARLES PIKLER


The 200th anniversary of the birth of Felix Mendelssohn (1809–1847) is commemorated at our concert by his *Hebrides (Fingal's Cave) Overture*, which achieved its final form in 1832. Fingal's Cave is a natural geologic cavern on the small Hebridean island of Staffa, which was a major tourist attraction in the nineteenth century, visited by many artists and writers, including Wordsworth, Heine, Sir Walter Scott, Turner (who painted it in 1832), and also Queen Victoria. Mendelssohn was violently seasick while seeing Staffa in 1829 as part of a long trip to Scotland, which also included Edinburgh's Holyrood Palace, a pilgrimage to meet Scott at his estate of Abbotsford, and ten days of hiking across Scotland to reach the West coast for the steamer to Staffa.

The Hebrides (Fingal's Cave) is one of the very earliest examples of what is now known as a "concert overture," a stand-alone single-movement piece not meant to precede a stage work. It is also one of Mendelssohn's most perfect compositions, and was a great favorite of Hector Berlioz (1803–1869), for whom Mendelssohn played it on the piano in Rome in 1831. The two single young men socialized frequently during the spring and summer of 1831. Mendelssohn found the Frenchman a great companion, but privately he found Berlioz' music intolerable.

Berlioz, one of the most brilliantly original composers in history, was misunderstood by many more musicians than Mendelssohn, but in 1832 Paganini, the greatest violin virtuoso of the century, commissioned a work to show off his new Stradivarius viola. Berlioz originally contemplated a piece for viola, orchestra and chorus about the last moments of Mary Stuart, the Queen of Scots, who lived in Holyrood Palace. He eventually composed a symphony in four movements for orchestra with solo viola titled *Harold in Italy*, named after a long poem by Lord Byron, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*. Berlioz recycled two themes from an earlier concert overture based on Scott's novel about the Robin Hood of Scotland, Rob Roy MacGregor, for *Harold in Italy*, including the principal viola theme of the entire piece.

Ironically, Paganini never performed *Harold* because he thought it insufficiently showy of his technique, but he did pay Berlioz 20,000 francs after hearing a performance of it in 1838. However, *Harold in Italy* remains the great romantic composition for viola and orchestra, and we are fortunate to have the principal violist of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Charles Pikler, as our soloist.

Richard Wagner (1813–1883) is renowned for his 13 operas, but his only mature orchestra piece, the *Siegfried Idyll*, occupies the middle position in our concert. Wagner composed it as a birthday present in 1870 for his wife Cosima (daughter of Franz Liszt) who had borne him his son, named, of course, Siegfried. The *Idyll*, which lasts about 18 minutes in performance, condenses several themes from the love duet of his four-hour opera, *Siegfried*, into his most tender and affectionate composition.

This concert of three Romantic masterpieces of illustrative music is certain to be a pleasurable experience! 

—David Ellis



THE EVANSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA IS AN ILLINOIS NOT-FOR-PROFIT COMMUNITY ORCHESTRA PROVIDING DIVERSE, ENJOYABLE AND ACCESSIBLE MUSICAL ENTERTAINMENT THAT ENRICHES THE ORCHESTRA, THE AUDIENCE AND THE COMMUNITY.

BEHIND THE SCENES



LAWRENCE ECKERLING,
MUSIC DIRECTOR

When we started (and titled) this column in Keynotes, I thought it would be interesting for our subscribers to get some insight as to what Music Directors do in preparing for the upcoming concert. In fact, what I think will be most interesting for this issue is detailing how many different things in the last month have occurred simultaneously, giving new meaning to the word "multi-tasking"!

As I began organizing this article, multiple major items were taking place, not to mention smaller projects within the larger categories. First, we were arriving at concert week for the February concert, with composer Joseph Schwantner, and violinist/composer Mark O'Connor both coming into town. And we were in the midst of rehearsals, meetings, dinners, pre-concert lectures, and the concert itself (featuring the Illinois premiere of Schwantner's *Chasing Light*...)

During that same incredibly busy week, programming was nearing completion for next season (our 64th), subject to the availability of both guest artists and of our concert venue. Last minute schedule changes by two of our planned soloists forced complete revision of one of the concerts for next season, including finding a new guest soloist, and moving the other program to the following 65th season (for which planning is already underway).

Oh, and I almost forgot. Two days after our highly successful concert on February 8 was the first rehearsal for our upcoming March 22 concert. (And my personal study had been going on for over a month in advance of that first rehearsal.) The orchestra was on such a "high" from the concert experience that it clearly was the best first rehearsal I have conducted since joining the ESO six years ago!

I have no doubt that as you are reading this, we are close to performing our March Concert, preparing our pre-concert lecture for Musical Insights, working with Charles Pikler, principal violist of the Chicago Symphony (the soloist in Berlioz' *Harold In Italy*), and that our 64th season will have been finalized and approved. (And I'll have been studying the music for our May Concert, as well as writing another "Behind The Scenes" article for Keynotes and also programming for our upcoming Westfield Old Orchard free summer concert on June 28.) The list goes on...and on...and on... 🎵

—Lawrence Eckerling
Music Director, Evanston Symphony Orchestra

HELPING CHILDREN SUCCEED IN SCHOOL AND IN LIFE

The Evanston Symphony Orchestra is currently running two very successful educational programs in Evanston and Skokie. We are proud to be a true community orchestra and recognize the need to help bring quality music education to students in our community.

Music In Your World is our program for Head Start, Pre-K for All and Pre-K At Risk students in District 65. The goal of this program is to awaken an interest in music early in life and engage students in a positive, creative activity that they can enjoy throughout their lives. Just about all the students involved in this program are from low income, minority families. These are not students who will have private music lessons. We bring a music education professional into the classrooms of about 400 children four times a year. We bring orchestra musicians as well. We sing, dance, play instruments and teach basic music knowledge and language. The sessions are high energy and the children learn through participation and repetition. Everyone, students, teachers and musicians, has a lot of fun.

Play Me a Picture, Paint Me a Tune! is our program for elementary and middle school students in public and parochial schools in Evanston and Skokie. Each year we select one piece of music from an upcoming concert and take it to the art teachers in the schools. The students listen to the music and create their own artwork inspired by the music. You will see the students' interpretation of Mendelssohn's *The Hebrides (Fingal's Cave)* at the concert. The pictures will be displayed in the lobby.

We are supporting the needs of children and their families in Evanston. There is a plethora of scientific evidence that music and the arts have a measurable effect on the development of children and their educational success. Music training before the age of 7 leads to the long-term enhancement of spatial-temporal reasoning and strengthens children's reasoning, problem-solving, and math skills. Involvement with music, whether as a performer or as a consumer, has been linked to intelligence. Music education has the potential to affect the lives of children, especially children labeled at-risk.

We are grateful to the grant makers that help make these program possible: Evanston Community Foundation, City of Evanston Cultural Fund, Kiwanis, and Target. A part of any donation you make as an individual will go to support programs like these. THANK YOU! 🎵



AN ALL AMERICAN CONCERT SELLS OUT!



JOSEPH SCHWANTNER, COMPOSER, TAKES A BOW

The **sold out** February 8, 2009 ESO concert featured music by American composers and was attended by Pulitzer Prize winning composer, Joseph Schwantner, through a grant from the Ford Made in America (FMIA) project, **and** composer and violin soloist Mark O'Connor. On February 6 and 7, Mr. Schwantner made presentations to over 300 area junior and senior high school students on the creative process of musical composition through a coveted FMIA sponsored residency granted to the ESO. Simultaneously, Mr. O'Connor led a workshop sponsored by the American String Teachers Association with scores of local string players hosted at Midwest Young Artists headquarters in Highwood.

At our February 8 concert, Henry Fogel, former President of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and of the League of American Orchestras, was Master of Ceremonies. Preceded by the Ives /-Schuman *Variations on America* and Barber's *Adagio for Strings*, Chicago native Joseph Schwantner's *Chasing Light*...received its 25th performance and Illinois premiere by the ESO, as it continues the 2nd round of the national FMIA project encompassing all 50 states. Dorothy Andries said of the ESO's performance, "...the splendor of the strings was reminiscent of the ensemble's



MARK O'CONNOR, VIOLIN SOLOIST

work years ago under...Frank Miller. Schwantner used the full orchestra for this stunning piece, like dawn, promised hope...with its fresh new light." Mark O'Connor thrilled the sold out house with his soulful and exquisite violin technique, accompanied by the superb performance of the ESO musicians. All in all, a concert for the history books! 🎵



HENRY FOGEL, DOROTHY ANDRIES OF THE PIONEER PRESS,
JOSEPH SCHWANTNER, AND LAWRENCE ECKERLING



All February concert photos by Charles Marshall

MEET CHARLES PIKLER – PRINCIPAL VIOLIST

Charles Pikler, the principal violist of the Chicago Symphony since 1986, will be the viola soloist with the Evanston Symphony in its third concert of this season. He will perform “*Harold in Italy*” by Hector Berlioz, based on Lord Byron’s poem about a melancholy dreamer named Child Harold. Charlie (as he is generally known) began taking piano lessons with his mother in his home town of Norwich, Connecticut when he was only three or four years old. He started violin lessons at the University of Connecticut at the age of 12 and later studied viola. When he joined the Chicago Symphony in 1978, it was as a violinist.



CHARLES PIKLER,
VIOLA

But Charlie hadn’t planned on a career in music. His career plans were geared toward engineering. “I majored in mathematics at the University of Minnesota,” he points out. “But an invitation to audition for the Boston Symphony made the difference. And I guess you would conclude that the rest is history.”

The viola is the least familiar of the regular string choir in an orchestra and we wondered why there are so few solo pieces composed for the instrument. “Partly because the cello can handle the higher register so well,” Charlie says. “And the viola always has been an inner voice. You will notice that the violas and cellos in the orchestra frequently play in unison.”

Asked if he has any hobbies, Charlie says “I don’t have time. My three children are all in high school and college, so I help them – whether it’s carrying things or giving suggestions about curriculum decisions.” Any parent with children in that age bracket can identify with his response!

The Evanston Symphony family welcomes this wonderful artist as he joins us in performing “*Harold in Italy*” – which is only performed occasionally. 🎻

—Lillias Circle



MUSICAL INSIGHTS

FRIDAY,
MARCH 20, 2009
1:30 PM

Enhance your concert experience with a sneak preview — Composers come alive and their passions take center stage when ESO General Manager David Ellis and ESO Maestro Lawrence Eckerling take you on an insider’s tour of the history and highlights behind the music. Maestro Lawrence Eckerling and lecturer David Ellis will explore the March concert program in depth. Join Maestro Eckerling for this pre-concert lecture/recital in the Westminster Place of Presbyterian Homes, 3200 Grant St. in Evanston.



Presbyterian Homes™

SUPPORT THE EVANSTON SYMPHONY WITH A GIFT TO OUR ANNUAL FUND

At our concerts you share the joy of music each time Maestro Eckerling and the orchestra take the stage. The ESO is committed to our mission of keeping live symphonic performances accessible to everyone. Because we keep ticket prices low, the ESO earns only about half of its operating budget from ticket sales. The other half comes from contributions – from people like you. Your gift also supports *Music In Your World* and *Play Me A Picture, Paint Me A Tune!*, the ESO's music education programs in partnership with School District 65, that strengthen educational outcomes and enrich the lives of our children.

All ESO donors are featured proudly on our **ESO Community On Stage** display in the Pick-Staiger lobby at our concerts. We value every gift given. For a leadership donation of \$350 or more, your name, or the name of whomever you choose to honor, is displayed as a *Principal Player* and donors of \$125–\$349 are *Section Members*. Each has their choice of instrument on our special *Share the Stage* display, which recognizes our most generous supporters. Of course, every gift, whatever its size, inspires others and ensures the ESO remains a strong and vital part of our community.

Make your tax-deductible gift today! Please look for the **ESO Community On Stage** in the Pick-Staiger lobby at our March 22 concert. You can even make your donation at intermission – and choose the instrument you wish to sponsor. Watch your mailbox for more information on **Share The Stage**...and thank you for your support!

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