



KEYNOTES

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF
THE EVANSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

LAWRENCE ECKERLING, MUSIC DIRECTOR

Blockbusters of 1830

The second concert of the ESO's 71st season of "Blockbusters" features two very popular cornerstones of the concert repertoire, premiered within about eight weeks of each other in 1830.

Our concert opens with the most important work for orchestra and piano by Frederic Chopin (1810–1849), his Piano Concerto No. 1 in E Minor. We are fortunate that our concert will feature Sean Chen, the third prize winner in the 2013 Cliburn Competition, who has agreed to replace, in the same concerto, the previously announced Kate Liu who was forced to withdraw due to a performance related injury.

This concerto employs the largest orchestra ever used by Chopin, and it is also, at 40 minutes, his longest composition. His performance as soloist in its premiere in October 1830 was his farewell to Poland forever; after a year of travels he settled in Paris for the final 18 years of his tragically short life. Paris was the artistic capital of the world while Chopin lived there; other residents included fellow composers Liszt, Rossini, Meyerbeer, and Hector Berlioz. Music critic Harold Schonberg has called Chopin "not only a genius as a pianist, he was creatively a genius, one of the most startlingly original ones of the century."

One could argue that Chopin's advances in piano composition were mirrored by the advances in the orchestra created by Hector Berlioz (1803–1869). The ideas and expertise of Berlioz about the usage of the symphony orchestra could fill a book, and they do, his *Grand Treatise on Instrumentation and Orchestration* (1842). The *Symphonie fantastique* was his first major work and has been called by Michael Steinberg "the most remarkable First Symphony ever written." Beethoven and Schubert had been dead only three and two years, respectively, when this symphony was premiered in Paris in December 1830, but the numbers and variety of the instruments required are

SUNDAY, MARCH 5 — 2:30 PM

BLOCKBUSTERS OF 1830



more typical of a symphony from around 1890. The ESO will be employing every instrument (or its modern equivalent) asked for in Berlioz' score, including two harps, English horn, four bassoons, two cornets, two tubas, two sets of timpani played by two to four players, and two bass drums. These are in addition to the normal sized romantic orchestra of 90 plus musicians. Please read Maestro Eckerling's article on the next page which details just a few of the performance issues requiring his decisions which are produced by the complexity of this remarkable score.

The *Symphonie fantastique* is also notable as one of the first large scale examples of program music, which is music that tells a specific story. Berlioz' program depicts "an artist, gifted with a vivid imagination" who falls in love with an ideal woman, but under the influence of an opium dream, dreams that he murders her, then witnesses his own execution, and finally participates in a Witches' Sabbath celebration which will provide a blazing conclusion to our concert. 📶

—David Ellis



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MUSICAL INSIGHTS

FRIDAY, MARCH 3, 2017
1:30 PM

MEET SEAN CHEN

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 THE MERION



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. For more information on ESO concerts and events, please contact David Ellis, General Manager, at (847) 864-8804. Write us at Evanston Symphony Orchestra, PO Box 778, Evanston, IL 60204. Email us at esomusic@evanstonsymphony.org. Visit our website evanstonsymphony.org.

BEHIND THE SCENES



I've always believed that a musical performance is a joint effort between the composer/creator and the audience, filtered through the performers. The orchestra conductor has numerous choices to make to bring off a performance. The conductor must hold in reverence

what the composer has created, with a genuine respect for both the composer and the composition. What the composer has written matters. Less tangibly, what the composer *meant* by what he/she wrote also matters. And sometimes, performers have enough information to make judgements, and sometimes they don't. And sometimes, generations after the premiere, new information becomes available through great scholarship that better informs on the range of possible interpretations.

The *Symphonie fantastique* of Hector Berlioz, with its extremely large number and types of instruments, has presented multiple performance options ever since its premiere in 1830. The ESO's performance will utilize the most recent edition of the score, which contains "more informed" information than earlier editions. Will the average listener (assuming familiarity with the piece) be able to hear differences from what they may be used to hearing? Some of the differences for sure! Others are more subtle. But even those subtle differences will make a difference in the cohesiveness and logic of the performance.

Probably the most obvious difference, one that many that listeners will notice, is that there is a "repeat" of the whole opening section of the fourth movement "March to the Scaffold." This lengthens this most popular movement by two minutes. But it is so exciting that it SHOULD be heard again! Other, subtler, pieces of new information include articulations of the woodwind solos in the third movement "Scene in the Country," and overall phrasing in all instruments throughout the entire symphony.

Is every question answered as a result of using the latest scholarship? Absolutely not! That is where the conductor's best musical judgment comes in, along with reverence for the composer. One example is that Berlioz "after the fact" added a cornet part for the second movement "A Ball" that was not in his original score. The edition of the score being used for our performance does not include this added part as a performance option, but after consultation with our principal trumpet player, I have decided to include it anyway. (Many Berlioz scholars believe this cornet part should be included in modern performance). Another example is in the last movement "Dream of a Witches' Sabbath." Berlioz writes a "glissando" (a slide) that goes for one entire downward octave (the distance of a complete major scale) for the piccolo, flute and oboe. The problem is that it is physically impossible to play that kind of glissando on any of those instruments! (The composer was only 26 when he wrote this!) So how to accomplish this, or at least approximate it, is definitely a decision that needs to be addressed for every performance of this symphony.

Finally, sometimes, certain traditions in music performance become so engrained in listeners' (and performers') expectations that when they are NOT there, even if it is nowhere to be found in the composer's score, people would miss it. One such place is in the final movement where, at an extraordinarily spooky point, string players usually play right on or very close to the bridge (*sul ponticello*) to create a very weird nasal sound. This effect is produced at virtually every performance, but it is nowhere to be found in any score created by the composer. The ESO will also follow tradition here!

I hope I've shown that musical performance is much more than just playing the notes. Many, many decisions must be made to ultimately give you, our audience, a satisfying sonic experience. 🎧

—Lawrence Eckerling

Music Director, Evanston Symphony Orchestra

Musical Insights — Truly a WIN-WIN!

Whether you attend Musical Insights to get a glimpse of the concert to come, or attend to enjoy the perspective of three gifted musicians (even though you may be unable to attend the full performance two days later) you are the lucky winner of a great mid-day interlude! ESO Maestro Lawrence Eckerling shares his fantastic gifts as conductor and interpreter of musical masterworks, discussing the various themes and structure of the selection, the highlights of different movements, demonstrating many of his points using his terrific talent as a pianist.

ESO General Manager David Ellis shares the depth and breadth of his vast knowledge of musical history and historic performances, providing social context, composer background, composition insights, then illustrating all this with brief clips of outstanding performances of the featured opus. Finally, the headliner soloist (this time, pianist Sean Chen)

shares his or her talent with a sneak preview of the work to be presented, and/or perhaps a short related work by the same composer. It's a chance to see and hear the soloist in a more intimate setting, reminiscent of a salon performance. A brief Q & A allows the Musical Insights audience to engage in the discussion; light refreshments after the presentation provide the opportunity to continue the conversation one-on-one with these three very knowledgeable and talented musical inspirations!

Truly a WIN-WIN — an interesting and enjoyable way to enhance your appreciation of the concert to come, or an informative presentation and demonstration of some of the great masterpieces of the symphonic library.

Friday, March 3rd at 1:30 pm in the Crystal Ballroom at The Merion (1611 Chicago Avenue) offers you the chance to be a part the next WIN-WIN Musical Insights! 🎧

Meet Sean Chen



Some pianists say they were on the road to their profession as early as grade school. Others claim they loved piano, but got started on the professional road more or less by accident. Not so Sean Chen, who can perhaps be described as more of a “calculated” pianist.

Sean’s parents came to the U.S. from Taiwan to study for their master’s degrees at the University of Illinois in Champaign-Urbana. After successfully completing their studies at U of I, jobs and second master’s degrees took them to Florida, where Sean was born. When he was four, his family, which by then included younger twin brothers, moved to Oak Park, California.

When asked if he came from a musical family, Sean described his parents as being appreciative of all types of music. His dad plays the guitar, especially the 70s music of James Taylor and Eric Clapton, while his grandfather in Taiwan plays traditional Chinese instruments and also enjoys the art of Chinese calligraphy.

Sean’s parents thought he would enjoy the piano because he had fun playing with a kid’s keyboard when he was very small, so he started “real” piano lessons at five and violin lessons a few years later. His brothers followed suit on both instruments, but Sean says they were better at the violin than he was, hence his concentration on piano.

He said he really enjoyed not only the sound but also the tactile experience of playing the piano, describing it as “viscerally satisfying using [his] fingers — and music comes out!” He was very happy when he was assigned a new piece of music to study because he always discovered something new when he tackled it.

Despite his obvious talent, Sean said that music was primarily a hobby in high school. He had some excellent teachers, each of whom had a different perspective and therefore contributed to his learning in different ways. He also soloed several times with a regional Los Angeles orchestra. Sean’s achievements were impressive even before he graduated from high school and included the NFAA ARTSweek, Los Angeles Music Center’s Spotlight, and 2006 Presidential Scholars awards. Because he was also good at math and science, he was accepted at MIT and Harvard as well as at Juilliard. However, he had trouble deciding which path to choose. Then came the “calculation:” if he went to Juilliard and didn’t like it, he could always transfer to MIT or Harvard and continue on a math-science path. However, if he chose the math-science path and didn’t like it, it would be difficult to transfer to a music school after not having concentrated on music for a prolonged time. Juilliard it was! (He also said that another thing spurring him on to Juilliard was the number of people telling him not to go there!)

If Sean was hedging his bets when he enrolled at Juilliard, any doubts he had about his choice were soon gone. Juilliard was where he says he “fell in love with music” and really enjoyed the work there. He also did very well in his courses, which meant that he could take electives at Columbia in other areas that interested him. He was particularly drawn to computer programming, graphics and animation, which came naturally to him and which he’s been able to put to use on his own website and in contributions to online open-source projects. He finds computer science a good mesh with music because, in addition to the artistic side of music, he says, there is also the business side with its necessary publicity and networking.

Sean earned both his Bachelor and Master of Music degrees from Juilliard, also garnering several more awards, most notably the Paul and Daisy Soros Fellowship for New Americans. In 2014, he received his Artist Diploma at the Yale School of Music as a George W. Miles Fellow.

While at Juilliard, Sean was third prize winner at the 2013 Van Cliburn International Piano Competition, in which he played under the baton of Leonard Slatkin and describes as a fantastic experience. He was also recipient of the DeHaan Classical Fellowship as the winner of the 2013 American Pianists Awards, a competition in which he played the Bartók Second Piano Concerto with the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra. Sean has continued to earn accolades for “alluring, colorfully shaded renditions” (New York Times) and “genuinely sensitive” (LA Times) playing, and was named a 2015 fellow by the prestigious Leonore Annenberg Fellowship Fund for the Performing Arts.

Sean like all types of music; he listens to “anything and everything” and appreciates good music of any genre. He played a lot of video games as a kid and, if he thought the music on the game was good, he would play it on the piano. This helped him develop a good ear for transcribing, improvising, composing and arranging. His transcription of Ravel’s *La Valse* has been received with glowing acclaim, and his encore improvisations are lauded as “genuinely brilliant” (Dallas Morning News). His *Prelude in F#* was commissioned by fellow pianist Eric Zuber, and subsequently performed in New York to excellent reviews. Sean is also an advocate of new music and has collaborated with several composers and performed their works. You can read more about Sean’s career at www.seanchenpiano.com. And, one more thing: he says he “likes jazz and can fake it — but couldn’t be a replacement in a trio!”

We are delighted to welcome this talented, multifaceted musician to our stage! 🎹

—Kelly Brest van Kempen

CD Signing

Sean Chen will sign copies of his Cliburn Competition CD in the lobby at intermission. The CD features music of Brahms and Bartók, and Beethoven’s “Hammerklavier” Sonata (No 29).



PHOTO/STRIKE 2 PHOTOGRAPHY

The Evanston Dance Ensemble danced Tchaikovsky's Nutcracker Suite accompanied by the Evanston Symphony Orchestra

Rousing finale brings record audience to their feet!

With 350 performers on stage, and over 1,100 people in the audience, the "Hallelujah" from Quincy Jones' *A Soulful Messiah* brought everyone to their feet as our special holiday concert came to its conclusion. This concert shows how our diversity can be celebrated and how music can bring audience and performers together as one community. This joyous festive concert is a collaboration of some of the best performing arts organizations in Evanston. It is the perfect way for families to start the holiday season and we had our largest audience ever this year. The three choirs, North Shore Choral Society, Evanston Children's Choir, and our own Evanston Symphony Holiday Gospel Chorus sang their hearts out, and the orchestra played superbly. Over 50 young dancers from Evanston Dance Ensemble brought Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker* to life. The orchestra opened the concert with a rousing version of *Deck the Halls*, and showed off some of its excellent wind players in selections from *Amahl and the Night Visitors*. Everyone left the concert smiling and feeling the warmth of the season. The ESO is grateful to the musicians, dancers, individuals and businesses which make this concert possible. 🎵



PHOTO/STRIKE 2 PHOTOGRAPHY

The North Shore Choral Society joins the Evanston Symphony Orchestra in performing Gloria



PHOTO/STRIKE 2 PHOTOGRAPHY

Evanston Symphony Gospel Choir with the Evanston Children's Choir

Celebrate the Evanston Symphony Orchestra in its 71st Season with your gift to the 2017 Annual Fund!

The ESO is recognized as one of the premier cultural assets of Evanston and the North Shore because of its musical excellence and community engagement. Our October 2016 concert featured Viennese "blockbusters" including Schubert's "Great" C Major Symphony. Our Holiday concert was the largest performing arts collaboration on the North Shore, bringing together over 300 performers from six Evanston organizations, including the Evanston Symphony Holiday Gospel Choir, to celebrate the season!

Of course, the ESO does much more than perform concerts. We bring music into the lives of Evanston preschoolers in HeadStart and Pre-K At Risk programs with *Music In Your World*. This special program was developed by the ESO at the request of School District 65, which was seeking arts-based education for its most vulnerable students. Through it, the ESO helps to enrich children's lives and strengthen educational outcomes. *Music In Your World* uses the power of music to teach critical concepts like opposites and sequencing, plus school readiness skills including listening, following instructions and taking turns. To quote Shinichi Suzuki, "Teaching music isn't my main purpose. I want to make good citizens. If children hear fine music from the day of their birth and learn to play it, they develop sensitivity, discipline and endurance. They get a beautiful heart." What greater gift can we give to our children and community!

The ESO is a true community orchestra that touches the hearts and minds of people from 2 to 102! We reach out to our audience with *Musical Insights*, our pre-concert programs on Friday afternoons before each concert that are free to all. *Musical Insights* expands patrons' musical understanding and enriches their concert experience.

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 2017 Annual Fund. Thank you!

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