




KEYNOTES

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF
THE EVANSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

LAWRENCE ECKERLING, MUSIC DIRECTOR

American Romantics

The third concert of the ESO's 69th season, with its theme of the enduring appeal of Romanticism for composers well into the 20th century, features three very well known American composers: Copland, Barber, and Hanson, plus a short piece by the Estonian Arvo Pärt.

Our concert opens with *El Salón México* by Aaron Copland (1900–1990). This 12 minute showpiece, premiered in 1936, was the very first of Copland's "populist" compositions in which he moved away from his previous "modernist" style to an accessible tuneful style. Copland had discovered the Mexico City dance hall of the title in 1932, and consulted a collection of Mexican folk songs to lend authentic local color to this brilliantly orchestrated tone picture.

The austere spirituality of the music of Arvo Pärt provides a complete contrast to *El Salón México*. Pärt was born in 1935 (he lives today in Berlin) and composed the original version of *Fratres* (brethren) for string and wind quintets in 1977. He subsequently recomposed the work for a variety of ensembles; our concert features the 1992 version for solo violin, string orchestra, and percussion. This ten minute piece might very well summon images of medieval monks with its hypnotic, chant-like quality. *Fratres* is a true contemporary music "hit," having been recorded more frequently than any other work on this concert.

A true concerto for violin and orchestra, that by Samuel Barber (1910–1981), will continue our program. In 1939, fresh upon the success of his *Adagio for Strings*, Barber received a \$1000 commission from a wealthy soap manufacturer to compose a violin concerto for his young adopted son. After completion of the first two movements, the young violinist deemed them lacking in showy character and virtuosity and requested improvement for the third movement finale. Barber then produced a dazzling non-stop tour de force for the soloist, which was pronounced "unplayable" by the young violinist, and the manufacturer

2:30 PM ON
SUNDAY MARCH 15, 2015

American Romantics

demanding repayment of \$500, which had been advanced to Barber. Having spent the advance on a European vacation, Barber was forced to have a student at the Curtis Institute of Music perform the finale with only two hours of practice, thereby proving that it was in fact "playable." Ironically perhaps, it is the lush romantic beauty of the first two movements which has made this concerto the most performed of all American concertos.

Howard Hanson (1896–1981) composed in a style even more consistently Romantic than did Barber; in fact he titled his Second Symphony the "Romantic." This symphony was one of many masterpieces commissioned by Serge Koussevitzky for the 50th anniversary of the Boston Symphony in 1930, and it has remained the most performed of all of Hanson's works. Its principal theme is used to close concerts at the Interlochen Music Camp in Michigan; it was also appropriated (without Hanson's permission) to close the 1979 movie *Alien*, and the complete 28-minute symphony will close our concert as well. 🎧

—David Ellis



FREE

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THE PUBLIC

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MUSICAL INSIGHTS

FRIDAY, MARCH 13, 2015

1:30 PM

MEET DESIRÉE RUHSTRAT

1611 CHICAGO AVE., EVANSTON

 **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



Today is February 2nd, 2015. It is the day after what was supposed to be our “German Favorites” concert, the second subscription concert of our 2014/15 Season.

I can’t convey the level of disappointment I feel at the circumstances

forcing us to cancel (and hopefully postpone) this concert. I am in my 30th year as a professional conductor. Sixteen of those years, before I began my tenure with the ESO, I was a Music Director in cold and snowy St. Cloud Minnesota. While it’s true that on one or two occasions, a rehearsal was cancelled in Minnesota due to weather, I have never in my 30 years of conducting had a concert cancelled, until yesterday. Writing on a personal level, the amount of preparation, anticipation, and excitement of readying a work of art to be shared with others is huge. And when it can’t happen, there is an empty and incomplete feeling. That’s what I felt like last night, and how I still feel as I write this.

I have no doubt that you would have similar thoughts from the players in the orchestra as well. Even while in the middle of our fabulous dress rehearsal on Saturday, we all knew about the storm to come. We were hoping for the best, but in the back of our mind were thinking about contingencies even as we were rehearsing for Sunday’s scheduled performance.

While there are countless ramifications to cancelling a concert, in the end it was about the safety of you, our audience (for those who would have tried to brave the weather), and the safety of our wonderful volunteer musicians. It simply would have been irresponsible to go on with this concert. In truth, my mindset on Sunday morning was that I ready to perform, regardless of the weather. But also in truth (and in hindsight), going forward with the concert would have been a disastrous mistake.

It is my sincere hope that by the time you read this, a postponed date for this concert will have already been announced, and we will have an opportunity to present this great music to you (and the incomplete feeling of not performing it will disappear). In the meantime, back to preparation for tomorrow night’s first rehearsal for the March Concert! 🎵

—Lawrence Eckerling
Music Director,
Evanston Symphony Orchestra

P.S. — As many of you know, we are extremely fortunate that all the stars were aligned, and we have been able to reschedule our February concert for May 31st! I’m thrilled that we will have the opportunity to perform this for you. Please see below for instructions on what to do with your tickets.

February 1/ May 31 concert ticket procedures

We fortunately have been able to reschedule our snowed-out February 1, 2015 concert to May 31, 2015. The time of 2:30 p.m. and the location of Pick-Staiger Concert Hall are the same, and the program, featuring Michelle Areyzaga, also remains the same.

KEEP YOUR FEBRUARY 1 TICKETS FOR USE ON MAY 31.

You do not have to do anything else except show up on May 31!

IF YOU CANNOT ATTEND ON THE NEW DATE OF MAY 31:

You have several options:

1. You may exchange your February 1/May 31 tickets for either the March 15 or the April 26 concert *without* mailing in your tickets. Call 847.864.8804, or email tickets@evanstonSymphony.org and specify which concert date you prefer. If you already have other tickets for the concert to which you are exchanging and would like all of your seats together, please indicate that and we will attempt to accommodate your request. Please allow sufficient time (at least 48 hours prior to the concert) to process your exchange.
2. Give your tickets to a friend so that they may enjoy the Evanston Symphony and Michelle Areyzaga.
3. Donate the tickets back to the ESO so that we can resell them and partially offset the unbudgeted expenses caused by this cancellation/rescheduling. 🎵

2:30 PM ON

SUNDAY MAY 31, 2015

German Favorites

RE-SCHEDULED!

Meet Desirée Ruhstrat!



When Desirée Ruhstrat was three, her mother, a violinist, would sneak her into concerts. She said Desirée always seemed to perk up when a violinist was playing! That perking up was obviously a good thing: Desirée started violin lessons at three and a half in a Suzuki program and by six was

studying in the DePaul University children's music program. She performed a Vivaldi violin concerto with the DePaul Symphony at Orchestra Hall when she was a mere six, made her professional debut with the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra at 12 under the direction of Lukas Foss and, at 16, was invited by Sir Georg Solti to play with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.

Desirée's family moved to the mountains of Colorado when she was nine, but she kept her close connections with the classical music scene in Chicago. She always knew that music would be a big part of her life; as a child she was enthralled not only by the music but also by seeing live performers on stage, a whole musical experience she called a "fantastic thing." When she was 12, Desirée was performing in Germany and greatly impressed one audience member in particular: Liselotte Schmitz Orff, the wife of composer Carl Orff was so struck by the young Desirée's talent that she invited her to spend two days at their house. Desirée describes the experience of being around a great composer and hearing his music as absolutely awe-inspiring.

During her teen years, Desirée won numerous awards, including first prize at the National Young Musicians Debut Competition in Los Angeles, where she was also given a special award for a young performer with extraordinary talent. She became the youngest prizewinner at Switzerland's Tibor Varga International Competition and also won the award for best interpretation of the commissioned contemporary composition. She went on to earn top prizes at the Carl Flesch, Julius Stulberg, and the Mozart Festival Violin Competitions.

After high school in Colorado, Desirée studied violin at the Curtis Institute in Philadelphia. She considers herself extremely fortunate to have gone to Curtis because of its small size (about 130 students total, including those in the vocal program) and because every student there is on scholarship, which levels the playing field considerably. She loves Philadelphia, describing it as a "great, beautiful, walkable city," visits whenever she can, and encourages her top students to apply for admission to Curtis. She also finds it a lovely coincidence that she will be playing Samuel Barber's Violin Concerto with the ESO; it is Barber's only concerto for violin and was written just five years after Barber himself graduated from Curtis.

In 2003, Desirée, cellist David Cunliffe (now her husband) and pianist Marta Aznavoorian formed the Lincoln Trio, which has been praised for its polished presentations of well-known chamber works and its ability to forge new paths with contemporary repertoire. *Fanfare* magazine has named them "one of the hottest young trios in the business," and the ESO was fortunate to have the Lincoln Trio as our soloists for our October 2010 concert. In 2011, Desirée and David joined with Serbian guitar virtuoso Goran Ivanovic to form the Black Oak Ensemble, naming their new group after the beautiful tree native to Illinois. The ensemble's tag line reads "From Bach to Balkans" and is an invitation to audience members to "[t]ravel from the baroque period to the present with the Black Oak's arrangements of ethnic tunes and beloved melodies of the past." Most recently, in 2014, violinist/violist Aurélien Fort Pederzoli of the Spektral Quartet joined the ensemble, which Desirée now describes as a "string trio with a guitarist" that wants to perform fun crossover music, exposing classical music to people who wouldn't ordinarily listen to it and presenting music to kids in schools "where there are no pianos."

In addition to her performances with the Lincoln Trio and Black Oak Ensemble, Desirée has her own studio and teaches at Chicago's Merit School of Music, where the Lincoln Trio are artists in residence. For the past two years, she has also been adjunct Faculty at the Jacobs School of Music at Indiana University Bloomington.

When asked if she has time for anything other than music, Desirée laughed and said she loves to ski, cook and travel, all with David. (She says they make a mean curry!) She enthusiastically described a recent trip to Morocco and said that they also enjoy visiting with David's family in his native Truro, Cornwall, at the far southwest tip of England, which she says has "the best cream teas and fabulous pubs!" (Truro is about 45 minutes from Port Isaac, a.k.a Portwenn. *Doc Martin* fans, eat your hearts out!)

Other favorite visits are with her mother's family in Germany and Switzerland and with her father's family in Gottingen, Germany, where her brother, Steven, also lives; he runs the family business, which has been in Gottingen since 1888. Desirée says her parents spoke German at home, but insisted that she and Steven respond in English. As a result, she says that she completely understands German, but thinks her accent has room for improvement. Desirée left us with a funny story from a Lincoln Trio outdoor performance. The Trio was almost at the end of a new concerto by a modern composer when a gust of wind blew the music off Desirée's music stand. Gone. "I had no choice," she said. "I faked the ending — but since it was modern music, only the composer would know!" The ESO is delighted to welcome such great talent — and pizzazz — back to our stage! 🎻

—Kelly Brest van Kempen

Music In Your World helps build pre-literacy skills

The Evanston Symphony is a key player in an innovative program designed to teach pre-school age children the basics of music. Since 2006, the ESO has partnered with Evanston-Skokie School District 65, providing orchestra musicians who volunteer to work with as many as 400 students ranging in age from 3 to 5 years.



In classes averaging 25 students, the musicians demonstrate how to play their full-size instruments and help the kids learn how to hold, bow and play smaller violins. In addition the musicians accompany Chicago keyboard artist Charles Taylor in leading the



kids in song. It's all part of ESO's "Music in Your World" program, designed to ignite interest, understanding and love of music.

But there's more to it than music. By teaching the basics of rhythm, melody and playing, the district

believes it can enhance early childhood literacy. Most of the children are part of the district's Head Start and special education programs for kids at risk, generally with limited access or exposure to music and the arts.

"Any method that uses language is important to promote literacy," says Amy Small, Early Childhood Coordinator for District 65. "When language is used in combination with music and rhythm, the excitement of learning these new words emerges."

This year the program is expanding from bi-monthly to monthly class visits. "The increased exposure will help the kids retain the basics and learn more about how to appreciate and play," says Ms. Small.

Music in Your World is made possible by funding from First Bank & Trust, and the Kiwanis Club of Evanston.



Improved Pick-Staiger Access



Arts Circle Drive, leading up to Pick-Staiger Concert Hall, is now fully open. You can drive all the way up to the entrance now to drop people off. Both levels of the parking garage are open, with exits at the east and west ends.

If you park on the upper level, the eastern pedestrian exit is now on

the same level as Pick Staiger. There are no steps at all between the parking and the concert hall, and no hill to climb.

Celebrate the Evanston Symphony Orchestra in its 69th Season with your gift to the 2015 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 2014 concert featured Russian masterpieces, including the Midwest premiere of Weinberg's *Rhapsody on Moldavian Themes* plus works by Rachmaninoff and Prokofiev. Our Holiday concert was the largest performing arts collaboration on the North Shore, bringing over 300 performers from five Evanston organizations together 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 2015 Annual Fund. Thank you!

DONATION LEVELS

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