



KEYNOTES

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF
THE EVANSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

LAWRENCE ECKERLING, MUSIC DIRECTOR

Blockbusters from Vienna

Welcome to the opening concert of the ESO's 71st season, titled "Blockbusters." Each of our four concerts features at least one major work deserving of the "blockbuster" title.

Our season opens with one of the most gripping overtures by Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827), that composed for an 1807 *Trauerspiel* titled *Coriolan*. A *Trauerspiel* featured unrelieved misery, despair and suffering, and the story about a Roman general named Coriolanus also inspired a play by Shakespeare. This nine minute overture comes from the middle of Beethoven's "heroic" period, a series of works renowned for their major key endings signifying triumph over adversity. But true to its subject matter, the *Coriolan* Overture ends in C Minor tragedy, one of Beethoven's extremely rare pessimistic compositions.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791) composed five concertos for the violin, the first in 1773 and the other four in 1775. The Fifth Concerto is in the "sunny" key of A Major, and is in the standard three movement concerto form. Mozart did not compose any extended solos (cadenzas) for the violinist, so our soloist, Alexandra Switala is writing her own cadenzas- see the inside for an interview with her. This concerto has been dubbed the "Turkish" because of the central portion of the final movement, which features exotic percussive effects for the cellos and basses and ascending and descending down scale passages for the orchestra.

Our concert closes with the final symphony of Franz Schubert (1797–1828), which is generally called his Ninth, but is sometimes referred to as the Seventh or as the Eighth. Regardless of its number, we can be certain that it is in the key of C Major, it was completed in 1825/26 and premiered in 1839, and it has the nickname of "the Great," which

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 30 — 2:30 PM

BLOCKBUSTERS
FROM VIENNA



originally was not an adjective concerning the quality of the music. Schubert wrote a letter in 1824 at the time of the premiere of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony revealing his desire to finally compose a "grosstes" symphony, which has a German meaning of "grand" or "large." A "grosstes" symphony connoted a substantial work using a large orchestra playing in the key of C Major or D Major, which were the traditional keys for trumpets and drums. (See Maestro Eckerling's column on the next page about the orchestration of this symphony and why "Great" is in fact an appropriate description of its artistic quality.)

This symphony is Schubert's supreme orchestral composition, notable for the prominence it affords the three trombones. Schumann referred to its "heavenly length," but its quick tempi and exhilarating finale make "the Great" a true Viennese blockbuster. 🎶

—David Ellis



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MUSICAL INSIGHTS

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 28, 2016

1:30 PM

**MEET
ALEXANDRA SWITALA**

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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



Franz Schubert was born in 1797 and died in 1828, only 31 years of age. He wrote an amazing number of compositions, with the official catalog topping out at 965. He wrote vastly more music than most composers who lived to be more than twice his age. His

works include symphonies, choral works, songs for all vocal types, chamber music for various instruments including string quartets and quintets and 21 piano sonatas. The list goes on and on...

One of the most striking characteristics of his music is the "ease" in which unlimited tunes flow out of his brain (and heart). Another is the depth that was reached in SO much of his music. Several works spring immediately to mind: *Erlkönig* (voice and piano) from 1815, the "Trout" Quintet of 1819 and the 5th Symphony of 1816. These already demonstrate a maturity far beyond his years. (And he would have been between 18 and 22 years old for these pieces). Another very important characteristic is how masterfully and seamlessly he changes from one key to another, known as modulation.

When you look at Schubert's symphonic development, and specifically his 5th Symphony (1816), 6th Symphony (1817), 8th "Unfinished" (1822) and the 9th Symphony (the "Great") (1825), you see a different picture. Maturity and profundity came later to him in the symphonic form than in the other mediums. I believe one major reason for this was the use of trumpets, horns and timpani. During Schubert's lifetime, those instruments were not as advanced as they

are today, and writing music in different keys often required different instruments for different keys! And changing keys at will was not possible. In my opinion, this reduced range of possible modulations between keys stifled him as a composer of symphonies.

The fifth symphony does seem relatively mature (it was written before the "Trout"), and I believe that is because he did not use trumpets or timpani, which thus made Schubert feel more compositionally free. The 6th symphony, delightful as it is, doesn't seem to have the "weight" of the symphonies around it. The 8th, or "Unfinished," consists of only two movements, neither of which is fast. There certainly is depth here, plus the inclusion of trombones, but there is no scherzo or allegro movement to round out this "symphony."

Which brings us to the 9th Symphony, which will conclude our upcoming concert. This is a Schubert work like no other. It was written in 1825 (in the same chronological area as the major song cycle *Winterreise* (1827), and from 1828—the Piano Trio in B Flat, the String Quintet in C Major and the Piano Sonata in B Flat) and is among among the most profound and mature music Schubert ever composed. While these other works are the pinnacle of a life-long maturation in composition, it seems in the 9th Symphony that Schubert has for the first time really "put it all together" in terms of scale, beauty, the ability to change keys at will (a huge part of his signature style), and to be both grandiose and intimate at the same time. This symphony is rightly called "The Great" for those reasons. I'm sure that when you hear this symphony, it will move you like no other symphony by this great composer. 🎵

—Lawrence Eckerling
Music Director, Evanston Symphony Orchestra

A Perfect Way to Start the Holidays for the Whole Family: Celebrate with Music and Santa on December 4 at ETHS

The Evanston Symphony Orchestra's holiday concert again will delight audiences of all ages. Come for a magical afternoon of festive classical music, singing, and dance December 4, 3 p.m. at ETHS. And this concert is all about our community. We welcome singers and dancers from all over Evanston to come together to celebrate the season. Nowhere else in Evanston can you celebrate the holidays with over 300 performers on stage who truly represent our community.

Our music includes both traditional and contemporary favorites. The Evanston Children's Choir will sing an old carol from medieval times; Evanston Dance Ensemble

will dance to Tchaikovsky's famous *Nutcracker Suite*; North Shore Choral Society will sing beautiful holiday music from John Rutter and John Williams, composed in the 20th century, and we will finish with Gospel Music, and a wonderful Gospel Choir, singing *Hallelujah*, from Quincy Jones *A Soulful Messiah*. This music is taken from Handel's *Messiah* (composed in 1741) but now updated to be an inspiring Gospel song. You will be on your feet and joining in—we promise!

Reverend Kenneth Cherry will be preparing the Evanston Symphony Gospel Choir and he will be leading them in more gospel music during the afternoon. At the end of the afternoon, join in with our carol sing-along and welcome a very special visitor from the North Pole.

Tickets are available on our website: www.evanstonsymphony.org, or simply use the ticket order form on the flap facing this page and mail it to P.O. Box 778 Evanston, IL 60204, or call (847) 864-8804. 🎵



PHOTO: STRIKE 2 PHOTOGRAPHY

Evanston Symphony Gospel Choir with the Evanston Children's Choir

Meet Alexandra Switala



When Alexandra Switala was four, her mother took her to a concert where children were playing different instruments. Allie pointed to a violin and said “I want to play THAT one!” And so it was!

Allie was born and raised near Dallas in a family that she describes as “musical in a way, but not directly related to classical.” Her mother, the daughter of Mexican immigrant parents who spoke only Spanish, had played violin in high school and wanted her children to have music as part of their education. (Allie’s older brother is a violist and they enjoy playing together.) As for her father, who grew up in a Polish-American family in Minnesota, he says he “plays the radio,” but Allie told us that he is a whistler with “well-trained ears” and can whistle classical and other pieces of music at exact pitch.

Allie’s four-year-old enthusiasm never waned. From Suzuki classes to a teacher who was a Texas fiddler, Allie kept progressing on the violin. As a Suzuki student, she performed in Nagaoka, Japan, as part of the Fort Worth Sister Cities program and later made her professional debut with the Fort Worth Symphony at age 13. In 2010, she and her mother moved to Evanston for two years so that Allie could study with renowned violinists Dr. Roland and Almita Vamos at the Music Institute of Chicago. Allie fell in love with Evanston, a place where, she says, “you can have a city feeling without being overwhelmed, and the sense of community is unique.” She even likes the snow, a novelty for a girl from Dallas!

There was no particular moment when Allie decided to make the violin her career; she said simply that the violin “was always there.” It was her “best friend” when she was growing up and then “transformed into something else.” She can’t imagine life without it.

From her early lessons Allie was taught by people who had graduated from the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia and she herself had attended the summer program there at 13. Although she applied to several music schools after finishing high school, Curtis was her first choice and she was delighted to be accepted, eventually studying with Pamela Frank. She graduated this past May and calls Curtis the “ultimate experience” for a music student.

Allie found Philadelphia charming. “I loved living there, loved its quiriness. Everything is cozy and close by. It’s homey and historic with a quirky, grungy side. The people are full of fire, but are so kind.” She misses walking through the neighborhoods, with their colonial-era streets barely wider than a living room. She also calls Philadelphia “a real foodie place. You can find everything if you know where to look!” She says that the profusion of outdoor cafes have revived the city and that there’s a real artist vibe that makes her want to sit in a coffee shop for hours.

An exciting part of Allie’s studies has been master classes with prominent violinists, including, Midori, Joel Smirnoff, Susan Kim, Miriam Fried and Pinkas Zukerman (who, she says, is really funny!). She also was one of 40 students fortunate enough to spend seven weeks at Itzhak Perlman’s Music Program on Shelter Island. On Friday and Saturday evenings throughout the summer, there is a concert featuring a student performance, and Perlman himself often conducts. Allie described this experience as magical and beautiful.

Allie’s routine for staying in shape for her instrument includes eight hours of sleep and lots of water. She likes yoga, but is not a big exercise buff. “In fact,” she said, “if you see me running, you should probably be running too!”

When not performing, Allie loves to read, but needs the feel of a real book in her hands, and has lately been leaning toward the Russian classics. She loves Korean food because of the spiciness and is trying to learn to cook, but says she’s been less successful at that. She’s also studying the baroque violin and loves getting together with other musicians with a bottle wine and her instrument because “there’s something so fresh about being in a big group and playing music together!”

Alexandra Switala has performed with many national orchestras and several area orchestras, including Northbrook and Skokie Valley, but this is her first appearance with the Evanston Symphony. We are delighted to welcome this talented rising young violinist to our stage! 🎻

—Kelly Brest van Kempen

The Evanston Symphony Orchestra

presents



EVANSTON SYMPHONY HOLIDAY CONCERT

LAWRENCE ECKERLING, *MUSIC DIRECTOR*

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 4, 2016
3:00 PM

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