



EVANSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Lawrence Eckerling, Music Director

2015-2016 ANNUAL REVIEW

EVANSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA CELEBRATES ITS 70TH SEASON

“PLATINUM PLAYING” 70TH ANNIVERSARY SEASON SETS NEW STANDARDS

Our audiences awarded the ESO with a number of new records in our 70th Anniversary season:

- Numbers of subscriptions
- Numbers of total tickets sold
- Ticket sales revenue
- Donations by individuals

The result was that 75% of our expenses were covered by individuals, leaving only 25% of funding to be raised from foundations, corporations and government. This diversified base of community support would mitigate the loss of any single funding source.

These financial records were due to the high artistic quality of the playing of our volunteer orchestra in these five concerts:

- **October 25:** Rimsky-Korsakov’s *Scheherazade*, featuring ESO Concertmaster Julie Fischer, was the highlight of this program of “Fairy tales.”

• **February 14:**

Evanstonian Howard Levy brought his virtuoso harmonica to Pick-Staiger Hall in a sold-out all-American concert which also featured the Midwest premiere of *Dreamtime Ancestors* by Christopher Theofanidis.



Howard Levy

- **April 10:** Another sell-out with our “Heroic Beethoven” program, which included the Fifth Symphony and the Third Piano Concerto with Inna Faliks.

- **June 5:** Audience favorites Wendy Warner and Irina Muresanu came together in the Brahms “Double” Concerto in a program contrasting the lighter with the more profound sides of both Brahms and Dvořák.



Irina Muresanu and Wendy Warner

- **And just for the holidays, our special Evanston Symphony Holiday concert:** The Evanston Symphony Orchestra once again presented this delightful seasonal concert showcasing the immense diversity that Evanston has to offer. The ESO was joined by some of the best of Evanston’s performing groups — North Shore Choral Society, Evanston Dance Ensemble, the Evanston Children’s Choir and the ETHS A Cappella Choir. Together we performed some of the season’s favorite music and dance. And this year a fantastic Gospel Choir drawn from Evanston’s churches joined the ESO and choruses in the “Hallelujah” from Quincy Jones’ “Handel’s Messiah: A Soulful Celebration,” using an orchestration specially commissioned by the ESO that brought the audiences to its feet!



Evanston Symphony Gospel Choir with the Evanston Children’s Choir

A BIG THANK YOU TO TWO VALUED SPONSORS

We would like to thank two very special sponsors for their continuing support this year.



The Merion continues as the ESO’s Musical insights host and sponsor. The beautiful Crystal Ballroom at The Merion is a superb setting for this excellent concert preview series.



Presbyterian Homes sponsored our “Heroic Beethoven” concert and provided refreshments for our audience. Maestro Eckerling, principal clarinetist Ralph Wilder, and bassist Dennis Morris performed a jazz recital at Presbyterian Homes in April to the delight of visitors and residents there.

MUSIC IN YOUR WORLD — OUR VERY SPECIAL MUSIC EDUCATION PROGRAM FOR 3–5 YEAR OLDS



This excellent music education program, specially designed for three- to five-year-olds, continues in District 65's Head Start and Pre-K programs. This program is now part of the pre-literacy curriculum titled "Every

Child Ready to Read." Singing is recognized as a key element in pre-literacy work because songs are a wonderful way to learn about language. With help from community support, the ESO will bring in four sessions and one performance day. On top of this, District 65 will pay for another four sessions over the year, doubling the amount of lesson time for the students.

The ESO is most grateful for ongoing community support for this program. First Bank & Trust, The Kiwanis Club of Evanston, and Evanston Community Foundation all support this program.

A SPECIAL 70TH SEASON THANK YOU

Dear Evanston Symphony Member or Supporter —

Success, for a true *community* orchestra like the Evanston Symphony, can be simply defined: Musical excellence, organizational stability and true community involvement.

This group of superb musicians, under the baton of Maestro Eckerling, have placed ESO among the very best community orchestras anywhere; its musical accomplishments have been nothing short of amazing. Organizationally, under the stewardship of David Ellis, the Board selected by ESO's musicians has achieved financial stability and is poised for long term success. (To a significant degree, that financial stability results from gifts and bequests from orchestra members.) And ESO's giveback to the community continues with every concert, every session of Music In Your World for preschoolers, every Evanston Symphony Holiday Concert (truly, the entire community's holiday event).

So on behalf of the Board of Directors, I'm pleased to celebrate the musicians, the people who've built a truly great community orchestra in ESO. For the Board, the community, and the audiences: Thank you, thank you, thank you!

—Vincent P. Flood, Board President

FINANCIAL STABILITY

These are challenging times for all arts organizations. That makes the ESO's financial stability all the more remarkable. Thanks to record ticket sales, increased donations from generous individual donors, strong continuing support from corporations, foundations and members of the Board of the ESO, and prudent financial management by the Board of the ESO, the ESO was financially successful for another year. The ESO wishes to acknowledge the following for their support of the ESO: City of Evanston, Generations Fund, Illinois Arts Council, The Merion, North End Mother's Club, Presbyterian Homes, and the USG Corporation Foundation, as well as our special "Music In Your World" sponsors. Plus this year we added special funding for the Holiday Concert from Citigold, Little Beans Café and Hecky's Barbeque.

BOARD CHANGES

Alexis Eyler and Emily Steadman, both members of the ESO's first violin section, and Margaret Gergen have been elected to the board. We welcome their knowledge of and interest in the orchestra. The board extends its gratitude and best wishes to departing board member Les Jacobson of the viola section for his many contributions to the board and the orchestra over the years.

OUR 71ST SEASON:

"SYMPHONIC BLOCKBUSTERS"

Our upcoming 71st season promises at least one blockbuster piece for each concert. The opening "Blockbusters from Vienna" features the local debut of violinist Alexandra Switala playing Mozart plus Schubert's largest orchestral work—the "Great" C Major Symphony. Last October pianist Kate Liu made headlines with her third-place finish in the International Chopin Competition. She returns to the ESO in her only local performance of Chopin's First Piano



Concerto, on a program which also includes the blazing *Symphonie fantastique* of Hector Berlioz. "Cinema Blockbusters" in May includes both the fiendishly difficult Third Piano Concerto of Rachmaninoff and John Williams' symphonic suite from his score for *Star Wars*. The season concludes with the biggest blockbuster of them all, and the most challenging work in the history of the ESO, Gustav Mahler's overwhelming "Resurrection" Symphony (No. 2).