



EVANSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Lawrence Eckerling, Music Director

2016–2017 ANNUAL REVIEW

EVANSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA AWARDED COMMUNITY ORCHESTRA OF THE YEAR 2017 BY ILLINOIS COUNCIL OF ORCHESTRAS

“BLOCKBUSTERS” 71ST SEASON SETS NEW STANDARDS

Our audiences awarded the ESO with a number of new records in our 71st season:

- Numbers of subscriptions
- Numbers of total tickets sold
- Numbers of tickets sold for the Holiday Concert
- Total Ticket sales revenue

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 mitigates against losing 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 30:** “Blockbusters from Vienna” introduced rising star violinist Alexandra Switala in Mozart’s “Turkish” concerto, with Beethoven’s *Coriolan* Overture and Schubert’s “Great” C major symphony completing the program.

- **March 5:** “Blockbusters of 1830.” Sean Chen dazzled in Chopin’s First Piano Concerto and the ESO played superbly in the difficult *Symphonie fantastique* of Hector Berlioz.



Sean Chen

- **May 7:** “Cinema Blockbusters” meant *Star Wars* as well as virtuoso Jeffrey Biegel in Rachmaninoff’s fiendishly difficult Third Piano Concerto, featured in the film *Shine*.

- **June 11:** The ESO stunningly met the supreme challenge of Gustav Mahler’s Second Symphony (the “Resurrection”) with the vital assistance of the North Shore Choral Society, soprano Carla Janzen, alto Stacy Eckert, and a battalion of extra brass and percussion players.



Carla Janzen and Stacy Eckert along with the NSCS

- **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 we set a new attendance record as well! And the Evanston Symphony Holiday Gospel Choir again 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 Dance Ensemble

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

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

Presbyterian Homes sponsored our “Mahler’s Resurrection Symphony” concert and provided refreshments for our audience. Maestro Eckerling and vocalist Lynda Dresher performed a recital of standards from stage, screen and the “Great American Songbook” 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 now part of the pre-literacy curriculum. Singing is

recognized as a key element in pre-literacy work because songs are a wonderful way to learn about language. The repetition of melody and words fosters memory and learning letters, colors, and numbers. This coming year, ESO will expand its program to reach underserved children right from birth in Early HeadStart. Parents of Early HeadStart participants will also be engaged in music activities with their children, building on a community-wide *Talk, Read, Sing* early literacy initiative by encouraging families to sing and make music together, strengthening emotional connections through music and shared activities.

The ESO is most grateful for ongoing community support for this program. First Bank & Trust and the Kiwanis Club of Evanston are long term supporters of this important work.

A SPECIAL 71ST SEASON THANK YOU

To the members and supporters of the Evanston Symphony Orchestra Association.

Last year my annual letter said, quite proudly, that in our 70th year the ESO's musicians and musical leadership had made our orchestra a model for artistic success by a community orchestra. And now, remarkably, you — the ESO players, section leaders and Music Director, with the Board's support and leadership — have done even better in our 71st season. As Maestro Eckerling noted recently, you are playing more great music, and playing it better, than anyone might ever expect of a volunteer-based community orchestra. It was a magnificent season: Bravo all!

And our audiences have responded: ESO is selling more tickets and generating more subscriptions than ever before. And under David Ellis' stewardship, ESO's finances are still sound. I often say, only half-kiddingly, that ESO's business model is to lose only as much money putting on concerts as we can convince donors to give us. Again this year, the orchestra's players continued their leadership with respect to those donations, and our board has followed suit.



Certificate for our
Orchestra of the Year Award.

And our volunteer board has sustained and grown ESO'S continuing involvement in the vibrant community that we are all part of. Our education programs (Music In Your World and a new program for even-younger children, both at District 65, as well as our Musical Insights programs at the Merion before each concert), our pricing policy aimed at making our performances available for seniors and youth, our participation in Enrich Evanston... these and more are aimed at making your great music a more important part of our entire community, with a goal of keeping that music relevant to, and entangled deeply into, the expanding arts scene in Evanston and the North Shore that we're now helping to lead. Our 75th season is approaching, but our goal is "100 and Beyond." If ESO's volunteers, both musicians and board, continue as we have in recent years, there is nothing to stop us. Again: 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, 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 another year. The ESO wishes to acknowledge the following for their support of the ESO: City of Evanston, Elizabeth Cheney Foundation, Evanston Community Foundation, Generations Fund, Illinois Arts Council, The Merion, Presbyterian Homes, as well as our special "Music In Your World" sponsors. Also the following corporate foundations: GGA, Google, Pfizer, USG, and W. W. Grainger. Plus this year we received special funding for the Holiday Concert from Bennison's Bakery, Tom and Cathy Carr, Little Beans Café and Seman Violins.

BOARD CHANGES

Cheryl Haack, the principal second violinist and former ESO board president, has been re-elected to the board. The board extends its gratitude and best wishes to departing board member James Berger for his many contributions to the board over the years.

OUR 72ND SEASON: "MUSIC FROM MANY LANDS"

Our upcoming 72nd season promises a richness of diversity of national compositional styles. For more information visit our website www.evanstonsymphony.org or call 847.864.8804.