



EVANSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Lawrence Eckerling, Music Director

2019–2020 ANNUAL REVIEW



As I am writing and looking back on the Evanston Symphony Orchestra's 2019–2020 season, I am remembering moments of joy as well as great disappointment. The season, our 74th, began with a concert highlighting Nordic masterpieces, included a joyful holiday concert made special with the inclusion of gospel music and dance, and ended too soon with our February concert featuring an all-American program that included George Gershwin's *Concerto in F*.

On March 1, 2020, the ESO was proud to learn that it had been honored by the Illinois Council of Orchestras as the recipient of the ICO's 2020 Community Relations of the Year Award.



This award recognizes the efforts made by the ESO to bring the gift of music to its whole community, from toddlers to seniors, and across the diverse cultures that make up our community. In particular, the ESO has focused on addressing issues of racial equity and inclusion in its concerts and outreach programs through addressing the inequitable access to music in our community, particularly for low-income minority children and their families. Those efforts include the following programs:



- Free young persons' concerts that include 140 middle school orchestra players through a collaboration with School District 65, intended to support young players of color to continue their school orchestra involvement and to raise money to provide funding for instrument repair and rental



- Free music education classes through the ESO's Music in Your World program for children in School District 65's Head Start, Early Head Start and Early Start programs
- Cross-cultural holiday concerts
- Free tickets available for checkout at the Evanston Public Library



February concert George Gershwin's *Concerto in F* with pianist Jeffrey Biegel

As an outreach to area seniors and as a way to make the concert-going experience more accessible and enjoyable, the ESO also provides free pre-concert lectures at The Merion as well as a large-print concert program edition. We also provide KidNotes, a special concert program created for children, but also enjoyed by many other concert-goers.

Like every other organization, the ESO was disappointed to have to cancel the last two concerts of its 2019–2020 season in response to the spread of COVID-19. Fortunately for our orchestra members who had worked so hard on music for our March concert, we were able to have a rehearsal with our soloist in the concert venue two days before cancellation, giving us a taste of the actual performance.

Also in response to COVID-19, the ESO is currently revising plans for its 75th season. With the health and safety of our musicians and concert patrons as prime considerations, we have decided not to hold any concerts during the remainder of 2020. As for 2021, we are keeping all of our options open. But we will be back to share the joy of music with our community.

In the meantime, we have posted videos of some of our past performances to YouTube, including from our February concert George Gershwin's *Concerto in F* with pianist Jeffrey Biegel and George Walker's lovely *Lyric for Strings*. Check us out!

Cheryl Haack
President

Evanston Symphony Orchestra

MEET OUR MUSIC IN YOUR WORLD TEACHERS

For over sixteen years, the Evanston Symphony Orchestra has provided free music education, *Music In Your World* (MIYW), to pre-schoolers aged 0-5 in District 65's Head Start, Pre-K, and Early Head Start programs. ESO has two wonderful teachers who teach music, movement, and experience with musical instruments. Charles Taylor teaches Head Start and Pre-K students, and Matthew Perutz teaches the students and families in Early Head Start and Early Start. Both these teachers know that singing develops important pre-literacy skills for these young students while building teamwork and cooperation, and instilling joy into their lives.



Charles Taylor



Matthew Perutz

COVID-19 shut down all classroom teaching from mid-March, but Matt Perutz has been teaching his classes to the Early Start families online and producing videos of musical ideas for our youngest students to enjoy at home.

FESTIVE HOLIDAY CONCERT

The holiday season in Evanston starts each December with our festive, collaborative Holiday concert. This last December we shared the joy of music with our community partners, Evanston Dance Ensemble, Evanston Children's Choir, the North Shore Choral Society, and our very own Holiday Gospel Choir led by Rev Ken Cherry from Christ Temple Church. Together we showcased music from many genres and cultures.



EDE danced Tchaikovsky's Nutcracker Suite accompanied by the ESO



All three choirs, along with the Evanston Symphony Orchestra, perform the concert finale 'Hallelujah'

A BIG THANK YOU TO OUR VALUED SPONSORS

We would like to thank our 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.



Westminster Place sponsored our "Sibelius 1" concert, featuring Mindy Kaufman, and provided refreshments for our audience.



Avidor Evanston provided sponsorship for our canceled "Tchaikovsky 4" concert.

Although the COVID virus forced us to cancel our final two subscription concerts, donations of ticket values for those concerts from our loyal subscribers and single ticket purchasers offset the majority of those lost revenues. The combination of this earned income with the many cash donations from our musicians, our board and our other supporters allowed the ESO to end the year with positive income from operating activities and with an increase in net assets, which is dependent on market fluctuations.

In addition to this broad based individual support, we are most grateful for generous gifts from businesses and foundations that support our education and community outreach efforts. The ESO also wishes to acknowledge the following for their support: Byline Bank, City of Evanston, Elizabeth Cheney Foundation, Evanston Community Foundation, Generations Fund, Illinois Arts Council, and North End Mothers' Club; and the following corporate foundations: AON, Citibank, Google, McMaster Carr, and Pfizer. Also, this year we received special donations for the Holiday Concert from Christopher Duquet Fine Jewelry, Evanston Community Bank & Trust, and Northwestern University.