



EVANSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Lawrence Eckerling, Music Director

2023 - 2024 Annual Review



Evanston Symphony Orchestra's 2023-24 concert series was themed *Feel the Passion*. And *passion* there was... at the very core of the ESO's musical repertoire throughout the season! Led by Maestro Lawrence

Eckerling, the orchestra played an amazing "broad-scope" of music ranging from traditional classical works to intriguing, modern compositions.



The ESO's 2023-24 season began with a free Lakeside Pops Concert in mid-August at Wilmette's Gillson Park. The weather was lovely and so was the music. Families

hummed along to a host of familiar favorites; impromptu dancing broke out on the lawn!

Our four series concerts highlighted some time-honored masterworks. Among them Mozart's Symphony No. 41 and Brahms' Symphony No. 2, two pieces that in Maestro Eckerling's expert perspective, "brilliantly tap into every emotion possible."

Coupled with that were new and exciting concerts that roused our audiences. Evanston local, Rick Ferguson, delivered a captivating performance of Shostakovich's whimsical Piano Concerto. *Moving Movie Music* highlighted magnificent repertoire from the "big screen."



The Rose of Sonora, featured artists LaRob K. Rafael of WFMT as host and narrator and solo violinist Holly Mulcahy, telling a musical tale of *passion* and tragedy. Composed by George S. Clinton, the work's inspiration came from Hollywood westerns.



In June, the saxophone took center stage in our concert entitled *Soaring Sax* and Dvorak's 8th. Saxophonist and composer extraordinaire Steven Banks impressed the audience with his energetic and

passionate playing – a treat for classical music lovers who rarely hear the sax in a solo orchestral role.



Our holiday concert was another spectacular success with our performing arts partners all present – North Shore Choral Society, Evanston Dance Ensemble, Chicago Ballet Arts, ESO Gospel Choir, and Evanston Children's Choir. All 1,400 seats sold out again! The excitement was electric and the audience and performers filled with exuberance and *passion*.

In March 2024, we partnered with Evanston School District 65 in a joint concert with middle school students. Young musicians and ESO orchestra members played side-by-side



at the concert to an enthusiastic crowd. Net proceeds from concert sponsors benefited D65's Instrument Scholarship Fund. Our thanks to the D65 teachers who daily inspire their students to learn, play, and strive for musical excellence!

Community outreach efforts continued to be an important part of our mission – from the Head Start preschoolers in D65 to the older adults who enjoyed our pre-concert lectures at The Merion in downtown Evanston. *HighNotes* and *KidNotes* continued as special publications for our concerts to better reach our audiences, young and old, demonstrating that *passion* for fine music knows no age boundaries.

The ESO looks back proudly on 2023-24 and eagerly anticipates another successful season – this one emphasizing *Soul & Inspiration*. To our subscribers, sponsors, musicians, Board members, and collaborating community organizations: Thank you for the part you play in ESO's success! We welcome everyone, in the myriad of ways you participate, to another year of making great music together!

Suzanne W. Nelson
President, Evanston Symphony Orchestra

Orchestra of the Year Award



We were delighted in May when the Illinois Council of Orchestras announced that we had won two awards: Community Orchestra of the Year and Board President of the

Year for Margaret Gergen, our immediate past Board Chair.

Evanston Symphony Orchestra Month



The Mayor of Evanston, Daniel Biss and the City of Evanston proclaimed June 2024 as 'Evanston Symphony Orchestra Month.' As well as our wonderful concerts, the award called out our community programs – Musical Insights, Music In Your World, and our free concert for Young Persons,

which included middle school students playing with the ESO. Margaret Gergen was commended for her leadership of the orchestra coming out of the COVID-19 pandemic and her calm management through the disruption caused by the unexpected passing of the ESO's long-time General Manager, David Ellis.



Mayor Daniel Biss and Lawrence Eckerling

A Big Thank You to our Valued Sponsors

We would like to thank all of our individual donors and valued business sponsors for the 2023-24 season. We couldn't do it without you!



The Merion continues as the ESO's Musical Insights host and

sponsor. The beautiful Crystal Ballroom at Merion is a superb setting for this excellent concert preview series.



Underwriters Laboratories sponsored the ESO Holiday concert.



Optima Verdana sponsored the Lakeside Pops summer concert.



The Woman's Club of Evanston



Arts Midwest



The Woman's Club of Evanston, Evanston Arts Council, Arts Midwest, and District 65 sponsored Music In Your World.

Illinois Arts Council Agency gave us a grant for general operating expenses.



We would also like to thank the following, which include the business and foundation sponsors of our free **Young Persons' Concert**: Seman Violins, Shure, Hagerty Consulting, Nature's Perspective, The Musical Offering, Evanston Community Bank & Trust, USG Corporation, Arts MidWest, Generations Fund, and WW Grainger Foundation. We also received a special donation for the Holiday Concert from Christopher Duquet Fine Jewelry.



Once again, generous donations from our musicians, our board, and our many other supporters helped make the 2023-24 Season a successful one.

If you or your business is interested in enriching the community through ESO sponsorship, we'd love to explore this with you! Please reach out at (847) 864-8804 or esomusic@evanstonsymphony.org.