



# KEYNOTES

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF  
THE EVANSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

LAWRENCE ECKERLING, MUSIC DIRECTOR

## The Virtuoso Clarinet

Welcome to the opening concert of the ESO's 73rd season, titled "Virtuosos" in recognition of the many superb local artists represented in our subscription series. This concert's "virtuoso" composition, Stephenson's *Liquid Melancholy* for clarinet and orchestra, will provide the centerpiece of the program between orchestral excerpts from the most popular of all Czech operas and the most popular of all Czech symphonies.

Bedřich Smetana (1824–1884) is frequently referred to as the "father of Czech music" even though Bohemia had produced many composers previously. But it was Smetana who composed the first major opera in the Czech language, *The Brandenburgers in Bohemia* (1862) and followed it with *The Bartered Bride* (1866), which remains to this day the most popular opera composed and sung in Czech. Ironically, Smetana was brought up speaking German with a first name of Friedrich, and he never really learned Czech fluently. The three dances come from each of the opera's three acts: a polka, a furiant, and a dance of circus comedians.

James Stephenson is a Lake Forest based composer who has provided several of the works performed at the ESO's Holiday concerts. His *Liquid Melancholy* (2011) for solo clarinet and orchestra takes its title from a phrase referring to sleep inducing medication in Ray Bradbury's novel *Fahrenheit 451*. Please read Maestro Eckerling's Behind the Scenes column on the next page for his personal appreciation of this 16 minute work, and also learn about our virtuoso clarinetist, John Bruce Yeh, in the interview next to Behind the Scenes.

The greatest of all Czech composers, by common consent, was Antonín Dvořák (1841–1904). Unlike Smetana, who concentrated on opera and the symphonic poem form created by Franz Liszt, Dvořák composed in the "absolute" forms of his friend and mentor Brahms, meaning

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 21 — 2:30 PM

## THE VIRTUOSO CLARINET

symphonies, string quartets and other chamber music, and concertos. His best known and most popular piece is his Symphony No. 9 "From the New World" which closes our concert.

Dvořák was enticed to come to America in 1892 with a job offer to serve as the Director of a new National Conservatory of Music in New York City. The founder and patroness of the Conservatory, Jeanette Thurber, also suggested that Longfellow's *Song of Hiawatha* would make an ideal subject for an opera by Dvořák. Although this project never got far, some musicologists are convinced that events in Longfellow's poem were musically set, without words, in the second and third movements of the symphony, which was premiered in Carnegie Hall on December 16, 1893. What is certain is that this symphony has never lost its place in the repertory due to its abundance of instantly memorable themes, the most famous of which is the English horn solo of the Largo second movement, also known as "Goin' Home." 🎷

—David Ellis



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**1:30 PM**

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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](mailto:esomusic@evanstonsymphony.org). Visit our website [evanstonsymphony.org](http://evanstonsymphony.org).

# BEHIND THE SCENES



It's a great privilege to have an opportunity to collaborate with soloists who are members of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, and in our upcoming concert CSO clarinetist John Bruce Yeh will join us for James Stephenson's *Liquid Melancholy*.

The Evanston Symphony Orchestra has performed numerous arrangements by Mr. Stephenson at our Holiday Concerts over the years. And we performed one of his serious compositions, *Magnificat*, at a recent Holiday Concert as well. This work demonstrated his "other side," in fact his "real side," as a significant contemporary composer. His *Liquid Melancholy* is an amazing composition. First and foremost, anyone who "fears" hearing it because it's a new piece of music should put those fears away. One doesn't perceive this music thinking "I'm listening to modern music." One instead simply hears a terrific piece of music. He has a knack for using modern compositional methods but without it sounding like you are hearing those devices. For instance, the piece opens with what is essentially a tone row (you hear 12 pitches in succession before any

of them are repeated). *Liquid Melancholy* also at times employs polytonality (music in more than one key at the same time). But all of that is just a secret recipe; it's hidden from sight. What is out in the open is the sheer drama of the outer movements, and the intense emotional center that is the second movement. And it is filled throughout with incredible virtuosity in the solo clarinet part.

I first heard this work (and was blown away) at the invitation of our soloist, at his performance at the Chicago Musical College of Roosevelt University. I was accompanied by dear friend and colleague, and Principal Clarinetist of the Evanston Symphony, Ralph Wilder. I subsequently first heard the recently released CD recording of this work with Mr. Wilder, on our way to a Chicago Symphony concert. And the two of us were texting John Bruce Yeh congratulating him on the recording after the concert. Many of you might know that Mr. Wilder recently suffered a tragic freak accident from which he is currently recovering. In the spirit of wishing him a speedy recovery, we are dedicating the performance of this work in Ralph Wilder's honor. 🎵

—Lawrence Eckerling  
Music Director, Evanston Symphony Orchestra

## In Memoriam

### Hon. Lorraine Morton (1918–2018)



Lorraine Morton was a trailblazer — Evanston's first African-American and Democratic mayor, and longest-serving mayor. When elected, she said "My immediate response will be to set a tone that will bring people together." Mayor Morton loved music and attributed it to her mother, who ensured that she attended cultural activities, even though they were very segregated at that time. Her parents taught two important lessons — about taking advantage of the world at large, and about the evil of segregation.

Mayor Morton understood how music brings people together and was an ESO subscriber for over 20 years. As a lifelong educator, she was delighted when we introduced music to Evanston HeadStart, bringing the joy of music to our youngest residents.

Mayor Morton, you are beloved and will be missed by this community you did so much to build through your life of service. Our December 2018 Holiday Concert will be dedicated to your memory. Rest in peace. 🎵

### Ed Bennett (1924–2018)



A cellist since grade school, Ed Bennett's most memorable concert from his early days was playing with the Gary Symphony Orchestra as a teenager on December 7, 1941; only after the conclusion of the concert were they told about the bombing of Pearl Harbor. The following fall, Ed enrolled at Northwestern, but left in January of 1943 to enlist in the Army Air Force. When he returned from WWII, Ed finished his BA, worked in finance, and sang in the choirs of several Episcopal churches along with his wife, Barbara. In 1962,

Ed was invited by legendary cellist and ESO Music Director Frank Miller to join the orchestra, where he was a mainstay of the cello section for almost 50 years. Ed died this past March and a celebration of his life was held on what would have been his 94th birthday in April — complete with birthday cake. 🎵

An article about Ed can be found at:  
[evanstonsymphony.org/content/celebration-life-ed-bennett](http://evanstonsymphony.org/content/celebration-life-ed-bennett)

# Meet John Bruce Yeh



John Bruce Yeh is the most successful double college dropout we know! After high school in Los Angeles, John enrolled at UCLA with the goal of becoming a doctor, but continued clarinet lessons with Gary Gray on the university's music faculty. While he did well in his pre-med studies, John was also winning all of the

the music awards. Gray, John said, was a "good psychologist and knew how to get the best out of me." He told John that he "needed to share his talent and study music," so John dropped out of UCLA and enrolled at Julliard — only to drop out of Julliard at 19 when Sir Georg Solti appointed him solo bass clarinet of the Chicago Symphony. Two years later, at 21, he was named assistant principal and solo Eb clarinet. Not only were his age and talent noteworthy, John was also the first Asian hired by the CSO.

John's parents came to the U.S. from China; both were trained musicians, but worked in science here. His mother had studied piano with a strict German teacher in Shanghai and his father was a vocalist who sang with the Stanford Chorale and the Harvard Glee Club while earning his master's and doctorate. They met in Washington, DC, where John was born, and moved to Los Angeles when he was two because his father got a job in aerospace engineering.

John's earliest music memory is a children's concert at the National Symphony Orchestra when he was about two. By sheer coincidence, the NSO's principal clarinet was Harold Wright, who later became John's model and mentor. John has more vivid memories of being taken to the opening of the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion in Los Angeles when he was seven, with Zubin Mehta conducting the Los Angeles Philharmonic and Jascha Heifetz as soloist.

When asked what it was about music that grabbed him, John said that there was always music in their house and that it just spoke to him, that the ability to tell a story through music was a good outlet for his creativity. At six he had his first clarinet lessons at school but isn't sure whether he chose the clarinet or the clarinet chose him! Good teachers pointed him in the right direction and his parents were a big support. In fact, John's father learned to play the harmonica so that he could play duets with his son.

After 40-plus years with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, John has accumulated a number of stories, some of which are funny and others that led to a change and a debut. The change came about when the bus carrying the instruments overturned in Texas during a snowstorm and priceless, irreplaceable instruments were smashed. This led the CSO to buy traveling instruments; their quality is excellent, but the priceless ones now stay in Chicago. The debut was also caused by a snowstorm. The instruments didn't arrive in San Francisco by concert time and, even though San Francisco Symphony musicians lent instruments, the CSO had to do a musical punt. The first half of the program was changed to chamber music, with Sir Georg Solti playing in the Mozart G Minor Quartet, his first public piano performance in the U.S. — and by default!

John and his wife, clarinetist Theresa Reilly, have three daughters. John describes himself as a "foodie," and all three have followed in those particular footsteps: Jenna is a sommelier in Chicago, Molly hosts "Girl Meets Farm" on the Food Network, and Mia, a middle-schooler, takes part in Kendall College's cooking camps.

Now, about that double dropout: shortly after joining the CSO, and at the urging of his parents, John finished his degree in 1980 by taking courses Northwestern, credits that Julliard accepted. We welcome John Bruce Yeh to his first performance with the ESO! 🎷

***This concert is generously sponsored by Westminster Place.***

**We appreciate their continuing support. Please read about what Westminster Place has to offer.**

## A Slam Dunk of a Partnership

As part of Westminster Place's robust community engagement program where we give back to the community at large, the Kimble Fitness Center has proudly made its swimming pool available to Evanston Swims! — a volunteer program designed to teach local second-graders the skills they need to become proficient swimmers. The program was launched with the goal of giving all of Evanston's children access to swimming lessons so they can be safe around water.

A survey of local families revealed that only 17 percent of Evanston's second-graders were proficient swimmers and almost 25 percent had no swimming experience at all. The Evanston Swims! program began as a partnership between YWCA Evanston North Shore, McGaw YMCA and School District 65 to remedy that situation.

The Westminster Place community was eager to lend a hand and volunteered the pool at the Kimble Fitness Center to the program. Each month, 20 to 50 second-graders gather to participate in the program.

By the end of this school year, we have helped almost 1,500 local children to receive swimming lessons. "It's a great program," says John Hanrahan, Fitness Center Manager at Westminster Place. "It does a great job creating awareness around water safety and promoting swimming skills at a young age. It also creates a lot of positive buzz with the residents. When the second-graders are at the pool, they seem to get a real kick out of it, too."

To learn more about Westminster Place or the Evanston Swims! Program call (847) 561-3422. 🎷

# The tap-dancing reindeer are back, with so much more — Tchaikovsky's Nutcracker, a celebration of winter in song, and, of course, Santa! All for your delight on December 2 at ETHS



PHOTO/STRIKE 2 PHOTOGRAPHY

*Evanston Symphony Gospel Choir with the Evanston Children's Choir*

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 on December 2, 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 350 performers on stage who truly represent our community.

The full Evanston Symphony Orchestra is joined by North Shore Choral Society, Evanston Dance Ensemble, Evanston Children's Choir, Evanston Symphony Gospel Choir, and the A Cappella Choirs from Evanston Township High School. Together we will play, dance, and sing your favorite holiday music.

And there is an extra special piece this year. Our very own gospel choir, led by Reverend Kenneth Cherry, will be performing a gospel version of 'Stand By Me.' This moving music was performed at Prince Harry and Meghan Markle's wedding this summer and captivated the world. Hear it again at our concert.

At the end of the afternoon, join in with our carol sing-along. We will finish with three choirs 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!

December 2 is a perfect way to start the holidays for the whole family. Tickets are available on our website, [evanstonsymphony.org](http://evanstonsymphony.org), or by calling (847) 864-8804. 🎵



PHOTO/STRIKE 2 PHOTOGRAPHY

*EDE danced Tchaikovsky's Nutcracker Suite accompanied by the ESO*

# The Evanston Symphony Orchestra

presents



## EVANSTON SYMPHONY HOLIDAY CONCERT

LAWRENCE ECKERLING, *MUSIC DIRECTOR*

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 2, 2018  
3:00 PM

EVANSTON TOWNSHIP  
HIGH SCHOOL AUDITORIUM



Featuring...  
North Shore Choral Society  
Evanston Dance Ensemble  
The Evanston Symphony  
Holiday Gospel Choir  
Evanston Children's Choir

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