The title of the second subscription concert of our 65th anniversary season refers to the close connection between the two principal works on the program: The Promised Land (Songs of the Next Life) by Gwyneth Walker in its world premiere, and the Symphony No. 4 of Gustav Mahler (1860–1911). When Ms. Walker graciously offered to compose a song cycle for the Evanston Symphony, detailed in Maestro Eckerling’s Behind the Scenes column on the next page, it was with the knowledge that the program would also include Mahler’s Fourth.

The primary connector between these two works is the fourth and final movement of Mahler’s symphony, a song for soprano and orchestra titled (in translation) “The Heavenly Life.” The words for the song came from a collection of German folk poetry published around 1805–1808 called “The Youth’s Magic Horn.” Mahler set approximately 20 of these texts to music, with “The Heavenly Life” coming in 1892, eight years before the composition of the first three movements of the symphony. Mahler unified the symphony by inserting multiple references to the final movement in these other movements, leading one Viennese critic to state that the Fourth “needs to be read from back to front, like the Hebrew Bible.” The most important of these unifying references is an outburst near the end of the slow third movement, which presents material soon to be heard at the beginning of the fourth movement song. This “opening of the gates of Heaven” is in the key of E Major (a key Mahler associated with Heaven) and which is the key of the final stanza of “The Heavenly Life.”

Taken as a whole, Mahler’s Fourth is the shortest (at 50–55 minutes) and lightest (no trombones or tuba) of his ten symphonies. Many find it similar to symphonies of the “Classical” period, such as those of Haydn, and the structure of the third movement is clearly related to the slow movement of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony.

Walker’s Songs of Heaven is cycle of four songs (each about four minutes in length) for soprano with orchestra, and is described by the composer as ”a set of arrangements and adaptations of traditional American folk songs and spirituals. The common element is the yearning for, or celebration of, the life beyond death—the “next life.” The songs express a variety of emotions, ranging from the sorrow of leaving this world, to the release from a life of suffering, and finally, to the joy of waking up to heaven.”

...Continued on page 2
A big thank you to Three Crowns Park who threw a 65th anniversary party for us following the October concert, replete with a cake!

SONGS OF HEAVEN...continued

The titles of the four songs are: “Every Night When the Sun Goes Down,” “The Morning Train,” “The Morning Train,” and “Walk On Up To Heaven.” The first of these four songs is: “Every Night When the Sun Goes Down,” a song from the Walker song cycle “The Sun Is Love.”

For more information on this successful (and delightful) contemporary American composer, see her website at www.gwynethwalker.com. There is an especially interesting 20-minute video that includes scenes from the performance of “Match Point,” a piece written to celebrate tennis, another of her passions. The setting is Carnegie Hall and the conductor is none other than Billie Jean King!

—Kelly Brest van Kempen

MEET GWYNETH WALKER, COMPOSER

Gwyneth Walker is New England born and bred, a descendent of Quakers who left England for America in the 1640s to find religious freedom. She grew up in New Canaan, CT, and fell in love with Vermont, her current home, when she spent summers at camp there as a child.

Her parents loved music, but had no formal musical training. However, her father was an inventor who was always trying out things about the house, so it was not thought at all unusual when Gwyneth, at age 2, was “inventing” her own songs and, by age 6, was writing music for her friends to play on toy instruments. When she began the formal study of piano, however, there was a problem: rather than practicing the assigned pieces, she would come back the next week having re-written them or bringing a composition of her own that she liked better. After several episodes like this, her teacher suggested to her parents that Gwyneth might be better off teaching herself – which she did.

She began arranging music for choral groups in junior high school and later arranged and composed for orchestra when she was a student at Brown University. She then received a doctorate in music composition from the Hart School of Music and taught at the Oberlin Conservatory of Music. While she enjoyed teaching, she soon realized that the demands of the profession didn’t leave her enough time to compose, so she left academia in 1982. She now spends every day writing music, and almost all of her work is done on commission.

Walker describes herself as a “composer of faith,” a legacy of her Quaker heritage, and much of her music is in this vein, such as The Promised Land and Alpha and Omega, a collection of Christmas songs for orchestra and chorus.

For more information on this successful (and delightful) contemporary American composer, see her website at www.gwynethwalker.com. There is an especially interesting 20-minute video that includes scenes from the performance of “Match Point,” a piece written to celebrate tennis, another of her passions. The setting is Carnegie Hall and the conductor is none other than Billie Jean King!

—Kelly Brest van Kempen

AN EVANSTON SYMPHONY CHRISTMAS

The Evanston Symphony Orchestra was delighted to welcome a new group to its annual festive concert – the Evanston Children’s Choir. This talented group of young singers, all dressed in yellow, made a wonderful addition to the afternoon. Among other numbers, they joined in Tchaikovsky’s Waltz of the Snowflakes, so beautifully danced by the young talent from the Evanston Dance Ensemble. The orchestra sounded on top form, as did the Evanston Festival Chorus. Thank you to Romano Brothers & Co. for generously sponsoring this concert. Another big thank you to all the musicians and volunteers who made this afternoon joyous for our 1,100 audience members.

—David Ellis

Back to the main text.
THE ESO BRINGS HIGH QUALITY MUSIC EDUCATION TO EVANSTON AND SKOKIE

Lawrence Eckerling, Music Director of the ESO, is a strong supporter of music education for all ages. “Music education must be an important component in our school system because music is a vital part of humanity,” he said at District 65’s offices. Maestro Eckerling was observing our ESO program, Music in Your World. The ESO brings this highly popular program to 400 pre-schoolers enrolled in Head Start, Pre-K for All and Pre-K at Risk. Led by Northwestern doctoral student, Charles Taylor, we introduce music, dance, music concepts and musical instruments to under-served three to five year olds, who actively participate in these classes. Music in Your World is made possible by grants from the Evanston Community Foundation and the Kiwanis Club of Evanston.

We also introduce classical music to middle schoolers in Evanston and Skokie through a program called Play Me a Picture, Paint Me a Tune! This music-to-art program, supported by Target Stores, shows 12–14 year olds the connections between music and art, meeting state standards for the arts at the same time. In the lobby at our May concert you can view pictures these students produced.

We encourage families at all our concerts so we provide special program booklets for children, titled KidNotes, at every concert at Pick-Staiger Hall. These booklets introduce the music and explain some important musical concepts while entertaining the kids with pencil and paper games as well. (And these booklets are so good that sometimes adults are known to ask for their own copy at our concerts.)

Maestro Eckerling sums up the importance of all these programs. “Our children need to learn how to feel things deeply, how to give and how to love. No other discipline can teach this like music can, and with a lifelong impact.”

CELEBRATE OUR 65TH ANNIVERSARY SEASON–WITH YOUR GIFT TO THE ESO’S 2011 ANNUAL FUND!

You share the excitement of a live symphonic performance each time Maestro Eckerling and the orchestra take the stage. For 65 years, supporters like you have helped bring music into our community.

The ESO keeps ticket prices low because we’re committed to keeping live concerts accessible to everyone. We earn only about half our operating budget from ticket sales. The other half comes from contributions from generous music lovers like you. Your gifts also support the ESO’s music education programs Music in Your World and Play Me A Picture, Paint Me A Tune!, in partnership with School District 65, that strengthen educational outcomes and enrich the lives of our children.

We value every gift given and all ESO donors are featured proudly in our concert programs. In addition, leadership donors of $125 or more are featured on our special Share the Stage—each chooses a favorite instrument to sponsor! Gifts of $125–$349 are Section Members and gifts of $350 or more are Principal Players. Of course, every gift, whatever its size, inspires others to give and ensures the ESO remains a strong and vital part of our community.

Make your tax-deductible gift today! Please look for the ESO Share The Stage in the Pick-Staiger lobby at our January 30 concert. You can make your donation at intermission—and choose the instrument you wish to sponsor! Watch your mailbox for more information on Share The Stage—and thank you for your support!

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