



KEYNOTES

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF
THE EVANSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

LAWRENCE ECKERLING, MUSIC DIRECTOR

Songs of Heaven

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 come 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 walking up to heaven."



MICHELLE AREYZAGA,
SOPRANO

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MUSICAL INSIGHTS

FRIDAY, JANUARY 28, 2011
1:30 PM

MEET MICHELLE AREYZAGA
AND GWYNETH WALKER

3200 GRANT STREET, EVANSTON

 Presbyterian Homes

BEHIND THE SCENES



LAWRENCE ECKERLING,
MUSIC DIRECTOR

Several years ago, I was searching for a soprano to collaborate with the Evanston Symphony and the North Shore Choral Society in an upcoming performance of the Poulenc *Gloria*. After Michelle Areyzaga was recommended to me, I purchased a CD entitled “The Sun Is Love,” on which she sings three song cycles by Gwyneth Walker, a composer new to me at that time. I loved the singing and I loved the music.

[Note: the ESO website has a link to purchase this CD on the webpage for the January 30 concert.]

Michelle was fabulous in our March 2008 concert, which included selections from Canteloube’s *Songs of the Auvergne*, as well as the Poulenc *Gloria*. I’m sure many of you still remember that incredible concert.

Two days prior to that concert, Michelle and I appeared in a 45-minute recital in the Piano Forte Salon Series on WFMT. I suggested something by Gwyneth Walker from the “Sun Is Love” CD because of my strong affinity for both the singer and the composer, which had become immediately evident when I heard that CD. So we wound up performing several of these songs, which felt very natural and was pure joy.

As a result of that experience, Michelle approached me with a new Walker song cycle and wanted to know my interest in premiering it with her. It was to be a work for soprano with chamber orchestra, so I had reservations about doing a work written for a relatively small orchestra because the Evanston Symphony is so large. So I reluctantly declined this opportunity. These songs became the cycle titled *La Ternura* (Tenderness), the first of which can be heard on the ESO website.

I attended the premiere of *La Ternura*, and because Michelle was so good and because the songs were so beautiful, I began regretting that this premiere was not with the ESO. However, Gwyneth Walker was sitting RIGHT in front of me at the concert. At the intermission, I told her much of the story above, and she replied, “No, you don’t want to do these with the Evanston Symphony. I’ll have to write a song cycle suitable for a big orchestra like yours with Michelle!” And that is how the seed was planted for what is now *The Promised Land*. I’m delighted to again bring Michelle Areyzaga to our concerts, performing a World Premiere by the composer who made me first love her singing. 🎧

—Lawrence Eckerling
Music Director, Evanston Symphony Orchestra

SONGS OF HEAVEN... *continued*

The titles of the four songs are: “Every Night When the Sun Goes Down,” “The Morning Train,” “All My Trials,” and “Walk On Up to Heaven.” The first of these songs includes a parallel to Mahler’s symphony: the mournful character of the first part of the song is transformed when the words “And when I rise up in the sky” are accompanied by a shift into the “heavenly” key of E Major.

The concert will open with a purely orchestral work by the ever-popular opera composer Giacomo Puccini (1858–1924). His *Preludio Sinfonico* dates from 1882 when he was still a student, but already shows the lushness of his orchestration and the beauty of his melodies.

I hope that the information about the music you will hear on January 30 has remained clear despite the “Hebrew Bible” order in which the works are presented. Rest assured that the concert will be in the proper order! 🎧

—David Ellis

A 65TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

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

GINA ESHUIS, THREE CROWNS PARK,
LAWRENCE ECKERLING, MUSIC DIRECTOR,
AND PENELOPE SACHS, BOARD MEMBER,
AT THE PARTY.



We thank the Elizabeth F. Cheney
Foundation for a grant in support
of this concert.

MEET GWYNETH WALKER, COMPOSER



PHOTO: ROBERT EDDY

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 Hartt 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 says she moves around a lot while composing: first she paces around her apartment or outside while thinking about the piece and letting ideas come, then dashes between desk and piano to get the ideas down on paper, and finally is able to sit at her desk to write the orchestration. When asked what sorts of questions she asks herself while composing, she replied that she first considers the group she’s composing for – for example, a string quartet versus a full orchestra. How will this piece differ from others she has written for similar groups? Will it have several movements? Will have several contrasting themes or variations on a major theme?

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! 🎧

Hear Gwyneth Walker, Michelle Areyzaga, and Lawrence Eckerling live on WFMT, 98.7 FM, at 4:00 p.m., Friday, January 28.

They will play excerpts from *The Promised Land* and Mahler’s 4th Symphony, and Gwyneth Walker will talk about her music.

—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. And another big thank you to all the musicians and volunteers who made this afternoon joyous for our 1,100 audience members. 🎧



JOE AND DICK ROMANO AND STAFF OF ROMANO BROTHERS & CO., LAWRENCE ECKERLING AND CHERYL HAACK, ALONG WITH THE EVANSTON DANCE ENSEMBLE.

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 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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