All three works on this third concert of our “Musical Passport” season evoke the beauties of the English landscape (and seaside), having been composed in Suffolk, Sussex and Surrey, but all three were actually premiered in London.

Benjamin Britten (1913–1976) began planning his opera Peter Grimes in sunny Escondido, California in 1942 when he read a series of poems titled The Borough by George Crabbe. Aldeburgh, on the North Sea in Britten’s native Suffolk, is the location for these poems, and after deciding upon the character Peter Grimes as the subject for an opera, he returned to England to compose it. The premiere in 1945 was an immense success; Peter Grimes is now viewed as the most important English opera since the 17th century. Britten assembled several major orchestral excerpts to form the Four Sea Interludes (Dawn, Sunday Morning, Moonlight, and Storm).

The Cello Concerto of Edward Elgar (1857–1934) was the last major work of his life, and ranks with that of Dvořák in the cello concerto repertoire. Elgar himself told a friend after its 1919 premiere “If ever you are walking on the Malvern Hills and hear the main theme of the Cello Concerto it’s only me—don’t be frightened.” Although Elgar was from the west of England, he composed this Concerto in a house named Brinkwells, located in Sussex not far from London. The Cello Concerto has four movements, rather than the three which are the norm for concertos, but is the shortest and most concentrated of Elgar’s important orchestral works.

Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872–1958) was a pioneer, along with his closest musical friend Gustav Holst, in exploring and documenting English folk songs; he also compiled and edited the English Hymnal (1906). His Fifth Symphony draws upon these traditional elements of English music for its inspiration, as well as upon themes from his opera The Pilgrim’s Progress. The 1943 premiere of this deeply spiritual symphony provided a transcendent escape from the horrors of World War II and the blitz, and it retains a very high standing among Vaughan Williams’ nine symphonies. It was composed at Leith Hill in Surrey, the home of the Wedgwood family of pottery fame, just 15 miles from Elgar’s Brinkwells. Vaughan Williams’ mother was the daughter of Josiah Wedgwood III and the niece of Charles Darwin, which may help explain why in spite of the religious nature of so much of his work, Vaughan Williams was actually a “cheerful agnostic.”

—David Ellis

MUSICAL INSIGHTS
FRIDAY, MAY 3, 2013
1:30 PM
MEET WENDY WARNER
1611 CHICAGO AVE., EVANSTON
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The North Shore A retirement hotel
After reading the “Behind the Scenes” article directly above, I hope that you are as excited about our upcoming “Celebrate Evanston!” season as we are.

Please note the flap to the right, which includes a complete listing of the concerts on one side and an order form on the other side. I want to draw your attention to three very important items about ticketing for next season.

1. This year the deadline for ensuring your same assigned seats will be **July 15** rather than the normal date of June 15, because our final concert this year is on June 16. However, please do not miss the July 15 date for our receipt of your order because we expect strong demand for tickets.

2. In order to ensure the maximum choices of seating for subscriptions, single ticket orders for the June 15, 2014 Verdi Requiem concert will be filled after our first concert on November 10, 2013, subject to availability at that time. Single ticket orders for all other concerts will be filled on July 31, 2013.

3. We will not be able to accommodate free ticket exchanges into the Verdi Requiem concert. Our normal policy of free ticket exchanges between concerts (as long the tickets being turned in are for a concert not yet played) will remain in effect for all other concerts and for exchanges out of the Verdi Requiem concert.

Thank you for your loyalty to our orchestra and please subscribe before July 15!

—David Ellis
General Manager
Wendy Warner describes herself as "shy," but you’d never think so from the enthusiastic talk about music and the bubbly laugh that came across the airwaves from Columbus, Georgia, where Wendy teaches at the Schwob School of Music at Columbus State University. She is an extremely talented musician with many accolades, but because the Elgar Concerto for Cello in E Minor is a standard of the cello repertoire, we decided to concentrate our questions on that great piece of music. You can read more about Wendy and her stellar career at www.wendywarnercello.com.

Wendy was a protégée of the great Mstislav Rostropovich at the Curtis institute of Music in Philadelphia and winner of the fourth Rostropovich International Competition in Paris at age 18. She said that Rostropovich didn’t want to give her lessons based on the Elgar because, in his view, “he didn’t play it well and therefore never performed it well,” a sentiment Wendy understands. "Elgar’s concerto has a specific emotion, a different kind of intensity from the concertos of Shostakovich, Prokofiev and Dvořák. It’s rhapsodic and operatic; you have to bare your soul in a different way than you would with, say, Bloch’s Schelomo. It has English restraint, yet is elegant. It’s hard to find a balance and easy to over-emote. You make it your own — or maybe not!"

She finds the Elgar not as technically difficult as some other works for cello, but says that the second movement does move at lightning speed. One of the more difficult things for the soloist is timing the vibrato with the orchestra. She especially likes the last page of the piece, where the soloist has to capture the essence and the drama "without over-doing it." As with any work, Wendy tries to bring an interpretation that serves and justifies the music. She says she is always growing as a musician and her interpretation will be different in ten years.

When asked if she was influenced at all by Jacqueline du Pré’s famous recording of the Elgar Concerto, Wendy responded that anyone who studies this piece should be influenced by it. Wendy doesn’t want to mimic du Pré’s style and says she’s a bit more modest and classical in her interpretation. However, “du Pré set the standard. It’s hard to say if anyone else has played it as with as much meaning.”

When Wendy performs Elgar’s Concerto for Cello in E Minor with the ESO on May 5, she’ll be using the very same bow used by Felix Salmond in the premiere of the work in 1919. While there may not be any resonances from that performance after almost 100 years, we think that Salmond and, especially, Elgar would be impressed by Wendy Warner’s performance of this great work.

—Kelly Brest van Kempen

Presbyterian Homes Rated Top-Notch Healthcare by U.S. News and World Report

For generations, Presbyterian Homes has been committed to its founders’ vision of providing a place where the dignity of every person is honored, spiritual values are upheld, and excellence of service and quality healthcare is the way of life.

U.S. News and World Report recently awarded five-star overall ratings to The Moorings Health Center in Arlington Heights, IL, and Westminster Place, McGaw Care Center in Evanston, IL. Both properties are part of Presbyterian Homes’ continuing care retirement communities. The health centers offer short and long-term nursing care, rehabilitation services and memory care.

“We’re very pleased to achieve a top rating in this report,” says Linda Dotson, health care administrator at Westminster Place, McGaw Care Center. “I believe it is our team that makes the difference. We have an interdisciplinary team that is very experienced and continually engaged in delivering comprehensive, person-centered care to our residents.”

The ratings were developed using combined information from state health inspection reports, nurse staffing information and selected quality measures of clinical care reported at the Nursing Home Compare website run by the Federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

Presbyterian Homes’ continuing care retirement communities offer the full continuum — independent living, assisted living, and healthcare availability on-campus if the need arises.

ABOUT PRESBYTERIAN HOMES

Founded in 1904, Presbyterian Homes is a not-for-profit, faith based organization with a national reputation for creating extraordinary retirement communities. Presbyterian Homes serves older adults through its residential and healthcare programs on campuses in Evanston, Lake Forest and Arlington Heights Illinois. The organization is accredited by CARF-CCAC (Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities-Continuing Care Accreditation Commission), the nation’s only accrediting body for retirement communities.

To learn more about Presbyterian Homes, visit www.presbyterianhomes.org or call (847) 866-1641.
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