



KEYNOTES

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF
THE EVANSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

LAWRENCE ECKERLING, MUSIC DIRECTOR

Russian Rhapsodies

Welcome to the opening concert of the ESO's 69th season, with its theme of the enduring appeal of Romanticism for composers well into the 20th century. All of the works on this program illustrate romanticism (in varying degrees), and all three were written between 1934 and 1949 by Russian composers.

Our season opens with the Midwest premiere of the *Rhapsody on Moldavian Themes* by Mieczyslaw Weinberg (1919–1996). Weinberg was born in Warsaw to Jews of Moldavian heritage, but fled to the Soviet Union when the Germans invaded Poland in 1939 (his parents and sister remained behind and perished in a concentration camp). Weinberg's early compositions came to the notice of Dmitri Shostakovich, who became a lifelong mentor and friend. Weinberg's output was huge, including 26 symphonies and seven operas, one of which, *The Passenger*, will be performed by Lyric Opera in February and March 2015.

The 13-minute *Moldavian Rhapsody* is in the form typical of the rhapsodies of Liszt and Enesco: a slow introduction followed by a fast conclusion. Weinberg's finale is particularly exciting with sparkling orchestration and a main theme reminiscent of klezmer music.

While Weinberg viewed the Soviet Union as a refuge, Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873–1943) left Russia at the time of the revolution never to set foot again on Russian soil. Rachmaninoff was one of history's greatest virtuoso pianists and he supported his family after leaving Russia in 1917 through concert performances as well as recordings, particularly in the U.S. His compositional activities were severely curtailed due these economic constraints, so only six of his 45 numbered works date from his last 26 years.

The *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini* (1934) is his last piano composition and one of his most popular, particularly due to its instantly recognizable 18th variation (out of 24 variations in total). The *Rhapsody* is in fact variations on Niccolò Paganini's Caprice No 24 for solo violin, and, in addition to the beauty of the 18th variation, is notable for

2:30 PM ON
SUNDAY OCTOBER 26, 2014

Russian Rhapsodies

presenting the first variation before playing the theme itself and also for using the medieval *Dies Irae* chant effectively as a second theme.

Our third composer, Serge Prokofiev (1891–1953) left Russia in 1918 for the U.S. and later Paris, but actually returned voluntarily to the Soviet Union in 1936, to great acclaim from the Communists. However, by 1948 he was on the list of those denounced by the government for the lack of simplicity in their music. His death on March 5, 1953 was overshadowed by the death (within the same hour) of Josef Stalin. Prokofiev's greatest triumph was the January 1945 premiere in Moscow of his Fifth Symphony, under his direction. His initial downbeat had to await a cannon barrage celebrating the crossing of the Vistula by the Russian army. The Fifth Symphony is in the tradition of the grand romantic symphony, which caused the musicologist Richard Taruskin to title his essay on it "The Last Symphony?" in reference to the supposition that it is the last symphony to join the standard repertoire. Whether this is true or not, the Fifth will certainly provide a dazzling conclusion to this concert of Russian music. 

—David Ellis



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1:30 PM**

MEET KATE LIU

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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@evanstonorchestra.org. Visit our website evanstonorchestra.org.

BEHIND THE SCENES



I trust that you have heard by now that Julie Fischer is the new concertmaster of the Evanston Symphony Orchestra. I know you all join me in welcoming her.

So what does a concertmaster actually do? Audiences regularly see the concertmaster ceremoniously walk out at the start of each concert to their applause. The concertmaster then cues the principal oboist to play the note "A" so that the orchestra may tune. More importantly, because almost all orchestral music includes solos for various instruments, it's the concertmaster who plays the solos written for the violin.

But there is SO much more! A large orchestra, such as the ESO, can have 100 members or more. Approximately 70–75% of those musicians are string players. String instruments have limitless possibilities of sound, and these possibilities are one of the main reasons why the sound of the orchestra is so magical. Whether the bow is going up or down changes the sound. The amount of vibrato (for expression) that the string player uses in the left hand at any given time also contributes to the palate of possibilities.

I've always believed that the most important role of the conductor is that of a "concept unifier." That means getting all 100 musicians to play with the same musical concept for each work. And the role of the concertmaster is that of a "strings unifier," so that the sound of all of the string players, with their limitless possibilities, is matching the conductor's concept of every work. This means making the proper decisions about up or down with the bow. It means deciding which part of the bow to use at any given time, and how much vibrato is being used. The concertmaster works with the other principal strings so that they can help spread that same concept through their own sections.

The concertmaster, therefore, has a huge impact on the sound of the string section, and in turn, the sound of the orchestra.

Incidentally, the word "concertmaster" is derived from the German word "konzertmeister." The part of that word "meister" translates to "master" as in the master of one's trade, or "teacher." So a concertmaster is a "master of the violin" in an orchestra. And that's why we call a female who has attained that position "concertmaster" instead of the incorrect usage "concertmistress." 🎻

—Lawrence Eckerling
Music Director, Evanston Symphony Orchestra

Barbara K. McCarthy: A Life in Music

With her signature bouffant hairstyle and bright smile, Barbara K. McCarthy was one of the driving forces behind the Evanston Symphony Orchestra for well over 50 years. When Barbara died on May 23, just two days after her 97th birthday, we lost a great friend and supporter.

Barbara, who was born and raised in Quincy, IL, excelled in school and in music from an early age. After high school, she enrolled at MacMurray College, where her piano performance earned her a public personal thanks from visiting aviator Amelia Earhart. After two years at MacMurray, Barbara transferred to Northwestern and threw herself into the music life of the university with a passion. She appeared in several of the celebrated Waa-Mu shows and, in 1938, performed Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* at College Night at Chicago's famous Edgewater Beach Hotel; she also performed at the Illinois Governor's Mansion. She earned both her B.A. and M.A. from Northwestern.

Barbara met Dan McCarthy at a 1945 New Year's Eve party; they were married six months later. While Dan helped run the family fine foods business and began what would become a successful real estate career, Barbara stayed home with their son, Todd, and daughter, Kerry, and enthusiastically pursued her musical interests. In addition to playing with the ESO, Barbara was active for many years as president and an officer of the Evanston Music Club and as a member of the Winnetka Music Club.

Barbara's name first appears on the ESO roster on May 20, 1947, the date the Evanston Civic Orchestra, the ESO's founding organization, performed the fourth concert of its first season. She was a mainstay of the ESO's cello section for more than four decades and could beam with justifiable pride during two concerts in which her daughter Kerry was the soprano soloist and yet another concert in which Kerry's husband, renowned operatic and concert baritone Richard Stilwell, narrated Ravel's *Mother Goose Suite* and Britten's *The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra*.

Barbara's involvement with the ESO was not confined to the cello section. She was president of the ESO Women's Auxiliary 1976–1978, and served on the ESO Board of Directors 1977–1987, six of those years as president. She and Dan, who died in 2011, hosted numerous fund-raising events, which helped ensure the ESO's financial stability.

Barbara closed her cello case in the orchestra for the last time in 1983, but continued active participation on the ESO board for another ten years. In 2011 she was honored for her lifetime of service to the ESO. After stepping down from the cello section, Barbara was an avid audience member at our concerts until last fall, when her declining health kept her home. Before her death in May, she made a generous gift to the orchestra, for which we are extremely grateful.

It is with much love, affection and gratitude that we dedicate our October 26th concert to the memory of Barbara K. McCarthy and her life in music. 🎻

—Kelly Brest van Kempen

Meet Kate Liu



When Kate Liu was 8, her father, mother, older sister and she got on a plane in their native Singapore and headed east. When they got off the plane, Kate's thirteen long hours of air-sickness and other unpleasant

things were forgotten: she was in Chicago and it was *snowing!* Quite an exciting sight for a little girl who was used to Singapore's tropical rainforest climate!

Kate's father, a computer scientist, had accepted a job with the University of Illinois at Chicago and, after living in River Forest for a while, the family eventually settled in Winnetka. Kate's sister, who is four years older than she, had started studying piano at 4 and, from the time she was a baby, Kate listened to her sister practice. "I was fascinated by the sound," she said, "and really looked up to my big sister." So, when Kate herself turned 4, she also started piano lessons and kept them up even after her idol switched to the violin.

Kate said that she was fortunate to have had the opportunity to study with the late Emilio del Rosario at the Music Institute of Chicago. "He was very good at teaching little kids about piano. He made his students ambitious; he lent us recordings and took us to concerts." (In an interesting coincidence, the late Barbara McCarthy, to whom our October 26th concert is dedicated, also studied with Emilio del Rosario, as did both of her children.) Kate noted that she had very good training at MIC and "survived" on the piano for about ten years without any intention of making the piano her career. Then, when she was 14, she spent two weeks at the International Institute for Young Musicians Summer Music Academy in Lawrence, Kansas, an experience she describes as "enlightening." For Kate, these two weeks were the first time in her life that she was with a group of people who were spending all of their time concentrating on playing the piano. "It showed me what the piano had to offer," she said. She came home thinking that perhaps she would become a concert pianist.

Since then, Kate has built up quite an impressive resume. In 2008 she played the four-hand Schubert *Fantasy* with renowned Chinese pianist Lang Lang in Chicago's Symphony Center, followed by solo performances in Carnegie Hall and the Kennedy Center in 2009 as part of a tour with the Music Institute of Chicago. She has performed with the Cleveland (2010), Hilton Head (2011), Rochester (2012) and Montreal (2014) Symphony Orchestras, as well as with the Skokie Valley Symphony Orchestra in 2010, and has soloed at the Bohemian Club, Temple E-Manuel, The Park, the Salmagundi Club and Subculture Arts Underground in New York and at The Phillips Collection and Church of the Annunciation in Washington, DC. She has also won quite a few major piano competitions and scholarships.

After graduating from New Trier High School in 2012, Kate entered Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia, where she is studying with Robert McDonald. Kate says she has fallen in love with Philadelphia, which she finds cozier and not so expansive as Chicago or New York, but still has that "city feel" to it and all a city has to offer.

In addition to classical music, Kate enjoys jazz and very much admires the ability of jazz musicians to improvise, something she thinks classical musicians should learn to do, "especially quickly and on the spot." She had one course in jazz improvisation, but would like to learn more if ever she has time. She remembers playing the piano in a jazz bar that was "underground, with funky lights, and all the people were sitting in a pit" — and Kate was playing Chopin! Like any college student, even a serious music student, Kate enjoys hanging out with her friends. She also likes to read and, especially, to draw. She had at one time wanted to be an artist and now finds herself covering any blank paper with images, both realistic and cartoon.

At a mere 20 years of age, Kate was described by *The Washington Post* as a pianist with "a burgeoning talent and a musical poise well beyond her years." We are delighted to welcome this talented young pianist to our stage. 🎧

—Kelly Brest van Kempen

A Perfect Way to Start the Holidays for the Whole Family: Celebrate with Music and Santa on December 7 at ETHS

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 December 7, 3 pm at ETHS. A special highlight will be the Midwestern premiere of the *Magnificat* for chorus and orchestra by popular local composer James Stephenson.



A VISIT FROM SANTA

The ESO will be joined by the North Shore Choral Society, Evanston Dance Ensemble with Elements Dance Company, and the Evanston Children's Choir. Join in with our carol sing-along and welcome a very special visitor from the North Pole.

Tickets are available on our website: www.evanstonsymphony.org. 🎧

Romanticism Endures

EVANSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Lawrence Eckerling, Music Director

2014-2015 CONCERT SERIES

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Russian Rhapsodies October 26, 2014

- WEINBERG *Rhapsody on Moldavian Themes*
RACHMANINOFF *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini*
Kate Liu, Piano
PROKOFIEV *Symphony No. 5 in Bb Major*



German Favorites February 1, 2015

- BRAHMS *Symphony No. 3 in F Major*
R. STRAUSS *Four Last Songs*
Michelle Areyzaga, Soprano
WAGNER *Overture to Tannhäuser*



American Romantics March 15, 2015

- COPLAND *El Salón México*
PÄRT *Fratres for Violin and Orchestra*
Desiree Ruhstrat, Violin
BARBER *Violin Concerto*
Desiree Ruhstrat, Violin
HANSON *Symphony No. 2 "Romantic"*



Swan Lake & Mozart April 26, 2015

- MOZART *Symphony No. 40 in G Minor*
TCHAIKOVSKY *Swan Lake Symphonic Suite*



Julie Fischer, ESO Concertmaster



On March 20, 1998, a teen-aged violinist named Julie Fischer stood on the stage at ETHS and played the first movement of Sibelius' *Violin Concerto in D Minor* as a contestant in the ESO's Young Artists' Competition. She walked away with first prize.

Fast forward 16 years. That same Julie Fischer, now an accomplished professional violinist, will again take the stage with the Evanston Symphony on October 26, 2014, but this time as the ESO's brand new concertmaster.

Music has always been part of Julie's life. She was raised in Skokie, the older daughter of Paula Fischer, an ESO violinist, and Bruce Fischer. Julie says that her father doesn't play an instrument but does have perfect pitch, a talent she herself inherited. When she was two and a half, she got her first violin; it was plastic and had Minnie Mouse and stickers on it! Her mother gave her lessons until she was four, then turned her over to another teacher, but Julie remembers very well coming home from school and sitting in her mother's lap while she was teaching. And, because Julie loves harmony, Paula got her to practice by making up harmony exercises for her to learn.

Julie earned her undergraduate degree with honors in 2002 from the Cleveland Institute of Music. From Cleveland she went to the New England Conservatory, where in 2004 she earned a master's degree with honors and was concertmaster of the ECC Chamber Orchestra; she also earned a graduate diploma with distinction in 2005. She studied for six years with Donald Weilerstein, who for two decades was first violinist of the famed Cleveland Quartet, and spent three weeks during each of two summers at Itzhak Perlman's renowned summer music camp in The Hamptons on Long Island. She won the Rembrandt Chamber Players Competition in 1997 and is a two-time winner of the Walgreens National Concerto Competition and a three-time winner of the prestigious Fischoff Competition.

Julie is currently on the teaching faculty of the Music Institute of Chicago (MIC) and is a coach for the chamber music program at Midwest Young Artists. In addition, she maintains her own teaching studio. She enjoys teaching very much, particularly the challenge of adjusting her teaching methods to each student — and, she says, each student changes how he or she learns every week! Aside from her own practicing and teaching schedules and, now, her duties as the ESO's Concertmaster, Julie enjoys playing the music of Brahms, Beethoven and Mozart "because you have to care about every note."

On the MIC website, Julie describes her favorite musical experience as one when nature and music were in absolute sync: "I was in Maine playing the Brahms piano quintet, last movement, and our coach, Lorin Hollander, was talking about the minor section, and how dark and depressing it was. He was incredibly dramatic, so much so, that it actually started to get very dark outside and rain when he talked about it! That was eerie. Then, we moved on to the major section, and he talked about that, and how happy, bright, and positive it was. Yes, you guessed it, the sun came out. We all got the chills, and none of us will ever forget that experience. Music is a bonding experience like nothing else!"

We are extremely pleased to welcome Julie Fischer as the ESO's new concertmaster and look forward to a growing number of musical bonding experiences from this highly competent violinist. 🎻

—Kelly Brest van Kempen