




# KEYNOTES

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF  
THE EVANSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

LAWRENCE ECKERLING, MUSIC DIRECTOR

## Cinema Blockbusters

The third concert of the ESO's 71st season of "Blockbusters" features music intimately associated with the movies: Rachmaninoff's Third Piano Concerto is an essential plot element of *Shine* (1996); Prokofiev's *Lt. Kijé* Suite (1934) is both original film music as well as a musical source for several later films, and John Williams' *Star Wars* (1977) is probably the most widely known film score of all time.

Our concert opens with some would say is the ultimate Romantic virtuoso work for piano and orchestra, the Piano Concerto No. 3 in D Minor by Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873–1943). Rachmaninoff was among the greatest piano virtuosos of history, with hands which could span 12 white keys on the piano. He was planning his first tour of the U.S. while living in Dresden in 1909 and needed a new concerto to follow on the success of his Second Piano Concerto. The Third Concerto provided Rachmaninoff with great acclaim; one of the earliest performances was with the New York Philharmonic conducted by Gustav Mahler. The 45 minute length and extreme difficulty of this concerto caused a nervous breakdown in aspiring pianist David Helfgott, depicted in the movie *Shine*.

Sergei Prokofiev (1891–1953) left his native Russia at the time of the revolution and established a career in both the U.S. (including Chicago) and in France. However, he became the only major artist to return to the Soviet Union, partly due to a commission to for the score to an early Soviet film titled *Lt. Kijé*. The film is set around 1800 and satirizes the sitting Tsar (Paul) at that time, a subject dear to the Communist Party. *Lt. Kijé* is a fictional character created by the mis-stroke of a clerk's pen, but as no one can admit a mistake to the Tsar, an entire life is assembled including exile to Siberia, reinstatement, marriage, and eventually death and burial. The film music consists of fragments

SUNDAY, MAY 7 — 2:30 PM

## CINEMA BLOCKBUSTERS



mostly lasting one minute or less, so Prokofiev constructed a 20 minute five movement suite by combining and expanding the segments of the film score. The tunefulness and popularity of the suite has resulted in its inclusion in the scores of many later films, notably that of Woody Allen's *Love and Death*.

John Williams (b. 1932) is undoubtedly the most successful composer of film music in our time, and his score for *Star Wars* was selected by the American Film Institute in 2005 as the greatest American film score of all time. Williams has also composed many concert and chamber works, and has arranged his *Star Wars* music into a 25 minute symphonic suite in five movements. The movements are: Main title, Princess Leia's theme, the Imperial March (Darth Vader theme), Yoda's theme, and the Throne Room and end title, which will provide a rousing finale to our Cinema Blockbusters. 🎧

—David Ellis



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### MUSICAL INSIGHTS

FRIDAY, MAY 5, 2017  
1:30 PM

MEET JEFFREY BIEGEL

1611 CHICAGO AVE., EVANSTON

 THE MERION



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



Let me go on the record right here. I absolutely love John Williams' music. And I ADORE the music from *Star Wars*. I think it's a fantastic piece of music, regardless whether it was written for a film or for a concert stage.

The Evanston Symphony and I have just finished (at the time of this writing) two weeks of rehearsals for Mahler's Second Symphony, in preparation for our June 11th performance. I can think of no piece of music which is more uplifting, more emotionally and spiritually transcending, and more deep and profound. And at our next rehearsal we will be starting work on *Star Wars*, Prokofiev and Rachmaninoff. You may ask yourselves: "How can this conductor just finish intense rehearsals for Mahler's Second Symphony, and then go right into *Star Wars* and call that music great? That he LOVES this music? Really? Music by John Williams, who has arguably stolen/ borrowed/ quoted from composers such as Holst, Elgar, Walton, and many more?" My answer is, yes. Really. The music from *Star Wars* is exciting, beautiful, even riveting. And above all, it's FUN. Who says every piece of music on every concert has to be profound, deep, and ultra serious? What's wrong with plain old fun? In my view, that's one thing we don't have enough of in symphony orchestra concerts.

The next question some might ask is: "Why is *Star Wars* on a concert alongside Rachmaninoff and Prokofiev? Doesn't *Star Wars* belong on a Pops concert?" There was a time, not long ago, where there was no such thing as a Pops concert. There were just orchestra concerts. Concerts that featured Brahms symphonies also included Rossini overtures and Strauss waltzes. Other pieces (to name a few) that are rarely heard in modern traditional symphony concerts anymore and seem to be relegated to modern Pops concerts are: Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue*, Grieg's *Peer Gynt* Suite, the *Zampa* Overture of Herold, Suppe overtures, Bizet's *L'Arlésienne* Suites, Tchaikovsky's *1812* Overture, Grofe's *Grand Canyon* Suite, etc. The list goes on.

Before 1960 these works, often called "light classics," appeared on programs almost once every concert. And looking right now at a random professional orchestra's season for 2017/18, I counted one such work included only once every six concerts.

At the Evanston Symphony, we try and offer as diverse range of music as we can to you, our audience. We offer many such programs containing both serious and fun music. What is the common denominator? That the music is good, and enjoyable!

See you on May 7th! 🎧

—Lawrence Eckerling  
Music Director, Evanston Symphony Orchestra

## ESO wins Community Orchestra of the Year 2017!

The Illinois Council of Orchestras has just announced that Evanston Symphony Orchestra won Community Orchestra of the Year 2017, in recognition of our exemplary achievements. We are very proud of this award. What does it mean to be a true community orchestra? The mission of the Evanston Symphony Orchestra is 'to provide quality, affordable and accessible classical music entertainment that enriches the orchestra, the audience, and the community.'

- **We provide an outlet for the talents of players in the area.** Our accomplished musicians come from many backgrounds; some play or teach professionally in schools or in bands, but almost all volunteer their time to the ESO; they come together to rehearse and perform ESO concerts for the sheer joy of playing symphonic music.
- **We collaborate with local performing arts organizations.** We perform regularly with North Shore Choral Society, Evanston Dance Ensemble, Evanston Children's Choir, and the Evanston Symphony Holiday Gospel Choir. We share the stage at our annual Holiday concert, which has become a tradition in Evanston and a festive way to celebrate the season. We are founder members of *Enrich Evanston*; a group of arts organizations working to improve inclusion and racial equity in and through the arts, here in Evanston.

- **We provide free pre-concert lecture/recitals** at The Merion on Friday afternoons before every subscription concert. All are welcome to hear our Music Director, Lawrence Eckerling, and General Manager, David Ellis, talk about the upcoming concert. Larry demonstrates on the piano; David shares some of his deep knowledge of the music's history, and often our featured soloist will play and talk with the group.
- **We welcome children.** Children 12 and under can attend our subscription concerts for free. We provide special program notes for them, called KidNotes to enhance their enjoyment. Our Holiday concert is especially family-friendly and Santa can be relied on to attend
- **We provide free music education for 3–5 year-olds** in Evanston District 65's Head Start, Pre-K and Special Ed classes. We have been working with District 65 for ten years now on this special program, called *Music In Your World*. Soon, we hope to expand our classes to include children and their families from birth to 36 months through D65's Early Head Start program, too.

If you have thoughts on other ways we might serve the community and share the gift of music more widely, please do let us know at [esomusic@evanstonsymphony.org](mailto:esomusic@evanstonsymphony.org). 🎧

# The Unorthodox Musical Path of Jeffrey Biegel



Most children begin to say simple words at age one, more complex words and sentences by age two, and are veritable chatterboxes at age three. Not so Jeffrey Biegel, who, by age three, had not spoken a single word. Obviously concerned, his parents took Jeffrey to a doctor, who tried communicating with him,

but to no avail. Finally, the doctor said his name very loudly several times. No reaction. Then the doctor turned to his parents and said, "Your son is deaf."

Jeffrey was indeed 85% deaf. He could not communicate and his only sense of music was vibrations that he could feel through the floor. Fortunately for Jeffrey and the music world – his deafness could be reversed. After corrective surgery, Jeffrey had a lot of catching up to do and wasted no time doing so. He was soon talking normally, but doesn't remember the first time he actually heard music. However, when asked what it was about music that grabbed him, he said, "Music grabs you! It attracts you to it. It's a language that you understand."

When he began piano lessons at seven, it was clear he had both the necessary talent and the determination to do well. Soon he was playing Clementi's Sonatinas and, at ten, gave his first public performance at ten at the Usdan Center for the Creative and Performing Arts on Long Island, where he played Chopin's *Fantaisie-Improptu*.

At 16, Jeffrey began studying with Adele Marcus, the renowned pianist and faculty member at Juilliard, who had also taught Neil Sedaka (about whom more later). When he graduated from high school, Jeffrey continued his studies with Marcus at Juilliard. He describes Marcus as "tough." At one point, she said to him, "I know it's in you, but I don't know how to get it out of you." He then realized that he was using more of his other senses to compensate for his early hearing disability and was thus more inhibited than someone who had always had use of all the senses. It was a breakthrough moment, and he credits Marcus with "opening his ears" to express himself through the piano. He still follows a technique that Marcus taught him, that of singing the music as he plays it. However, it wasn't until years later that, when talking to a writer who asked him about the effects of his childhood disability on his career, Jeffrey realized he had never told Marcus about his deafness.

Because of what he calls his "reverse-Beethoven" musical career, Jeffrey has had the freedom to follow a rather unorthodox path in music. He was once told that "When you play the piano, it doesn't sound like a piano." Jeffrey replied that his conception and utilization of the piano is as a language. "The piano is an extension of your voice. The fingers follow the voice and the keys are just an extension of the strings." He thus teaches his students in master classes to sing out the music and to play an imaginary piano to get a sense of the space the piece needs and the air around the notes. He finds this technique changes the way his students use their

arms and fingers to create sound and helps them better hear what sounds are created in the inner mind.

Jeffrey's unorthodox path has also led him to collaborations with some unorthodox classical musicians, including Neil Sedaka and Peter Tork. Sedaka is best known for his teenage hits like "Stupid Cupid" and "Breaking Up Is Hard To Do" in the rock-and-roll years, but few know that he is also a Juilliard-trained classical pianist who was to represent the United States at the 1966 Tchaikovsky competition in Moscow. When this was revealed as his "secret" on the "I've Got a Secret" quiz show, he was challenged by a panelist who said that that couldn't be true because the Soviets had outlawed rock-and-roll music as decadent. Sedaka promptly sat down at a piano and impressed the panelists by playing Chopin's *Fantaisie-Improptu*, the same piece that young Jeffrey Biegel would play some years later at his first public performance. Despite his classical proficiency, however, Sedaka never got to compete in the Tchaikovsky competition; the Soviets did indeed disqualify him because of his "other" life as a pop star. Sedaka's current biography says that he has returned to his classical roots. In October 2010, he recorded his first piano concerto, "Manhattan Intermezzo;" the piece contains "bells and whistles so it's more like Rachmaninoff," additions Jeffrey made to the piano part with Sedaka's encouragement and approval.

Peter Tork is forever connected with The Monkees, the fictitious band in a 1960s TV series. Tork states on his webpage that he met "a professional classical piano player by the name of Jeffrey Biegel." They had an interesting conversation about classical music and kept in touch. Then Jeffrey wrote to Tork and asked him to compose something for piano and orchestra for a performance with Orchestra Kentucky. "At first I declined," Tork wrote, "thinking I could never do anything serious like that, at least not without writing obvious stuff. But some ideas began to roll around in my head, and I sat down to play them. Lo and behold, strange stuff that I liked emerged... and it was a tremendous thrill to hear what I'd written performed by about 65 musicians...all at once!"

Jeffrey says that, because of his early disability, his whole life has been based on thinking outside the box. He told us that "classical composers were pop writers of their day, so why not have pop writers compose classical music?" Hence his collaborations with Sedaka and Tork as well as with Josh Groban, Jimmy Webb (who wrote his "Nocturne for Piano and Orchestra" for Jeffrey), David Foster, Peter Schickele (a.k.a. P.D.Q. Bach), and many others.

Jeffrey considers himself "a conduit between the past and the future." His work with popular and younger musicians is his way of keeping the classics going and making sure classical music never disappears. We applaud and encourage his efforts and look forward to welcoming this "unorthodox" pianist to our stage on May 7! 🎻

—Kelly Brest van Kempen



# EVANSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

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Preferred Seating \*second price shown is Preferred Seating area price

*Family package special includes tickets for 2 adults and 3 children*

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**Mail form to: Evanston Symphony Orchestra, PO Box 778, Evanston, IL 60204**

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**EVANSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA**

Lawrence Eckerling, Music Director

**2017–2018 CONCERT SERIES**

*Music from*  
**MANY LANDS**

**OCTOBER 22, 2017**

**BEETHOVEN 7**

SCHUMANN

*Manfred Overture*

SIBELIUS

**Violin Concerto in D Minor**

William Hagen, *violin*

BEETHOVEN

**Symphony No. 7 in A Major**

**FEBRUARY 4, 2018**

**RODRIGO  
GUITAR  
CONCERTO**

CHABRIER

*España*

RODRIGO

**Concierto de Aranjuez**

Jason Blair Lewis, *guitar*

GINASTERA

*Estancia Suite*

MONCAYO

*Huapango*

PIAZZOLLA

*Oblivion*

Julie Fischer, *violin*

RIMSKY-KORSAKOV

**Capriccio espagnol**

BERNSTEIN

**“Mambo”**

**from West Side Story**

**MARCH 18, 2018**

**IMPERIAL  
LONDON**

HAYDN

**Symphony No. 104  
in D Major “London”**

VAUGHAN WILLIAMS

*English Folk Song Suite*

GRAINGER

*Shepherd’s Hey*

WALTON

*Crown Imperial  
(Coronation March)*

PURCELL

**Rondeau from  
Abdelazer Suite**

BRITTEN

**The Young Person’s Guide  
to the Orchestra**

Henry Fogel, *narrator*

**MAY 13, 2018**

**BRAHMS  
PIANO  
CONCERTO 1**

CORIGLIANO

*Promenade Overture*

BRAHMS

**Piano Concerto No. 1  
in D Minor**

Thomas Pandolfi, *piano*

STRAVINSKY

**Firebird Suite (1945)**