

# KEYNOTES

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF  
THE EVANSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

LAWRENCE ECKERLING, MUSIC DIRECTOR



## Rodrigo Guitar Concerto

The ESO's 72nd season is titled "Music from Many Lands" in recognition of the diversity of countries and cultures represented in our subscription series, and this second program is extremely varied in its geographic reach. It is also the only program this season without a work taken from the Austro-German "mainstream" which dominates most symphonic series.

The *Concierto de Aranjuez* of Joaquin Rodrigo (1901–1999) is without a doubt the most popular work for guitar and orchestra ever composed, and is the only one of the three "Spanish" works on our program actually composed by a Spaniard. The concerto dates from 1939 and was the first of a number of concertos by Rodrigo for guitars as well as a variety of other instruments. The second movement of the *Concierto* is among the most recognizable in music and served as the basis for the famous trumpet improvisation by Miles Davis in his album *Sketches of Spain*.

The program opens with the Frenchman Emanuel Chabrier's 1883 view of Spain, *España*. This rhapsody for orchestra was a precursor of many "Spanish" works by French composers such as Debussy's *Ibéria* and Ravel's *Rapsodie espagnole*, but it also provided the melodies for a hit song of the 1950's — "Hot Diggity Dog Ziggy." The concert's third Spanish-inspired work is the great orchestral showpiece *Capriccio espagnol* (1887) by the Russian Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov. The Capriccio was originally planned as a work for solo violin and orchestra, and its many violin solos show this provenance.

Latin American works comprise the remainder of our program, with compositions representing Argentina, Mexico, and Puerto Rico (via New York City). The first half of the concert will close with a work from Argentina, the Suite from the ballet *Estancia* (1941) by Alberto Ginastera (1916–1983). The titles of the four dances are indicative of the nationalism of the ballet: Agricultural Workers,

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 4 — 2:30 PM

## RODRIGO GUITAR CONCERTO

Wheat Dance, Ranch Hands, and "Malambo," which depicts a dance contest between teams of gauchos. The first work on the second half of the program also dates from 1941: *Huapango* by the Mexican José Pablo Moncayo (1912–1958). The title refers to a form of mariachi music prevalent around Veracruz on the southeastern coast of Mexico; three traditional melodies from the area provide the basis for this exciting piece.

Continuing the 1941 theme, it was in that year that the Argentinian Astor Piazzolla (1921–1992) began formal music studies with Alberto Ginastera. Piazzolla was already a professional musician, and he has become identified with the tango to a greater extent than any other composer. His beautiful five minute work *Oblivion* was the title track of a score for a 1982 Italian film.

Our concert concludes with the rousing "Mambo" from the dances Leonard Bernstein composed for the musical *West Side Story* in 1957.

—David Ellis

## MUSICAL INSIGHTS

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 2018  
1:30 PM

MEET JASON BLAIR LEWIS AND JULIE FISCHER

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# BEHIND THE SCENES



The programming of this upcoming concert has been a very important part of our "Music from Many Lands" season. The unifying theme of the concert is music related to Spain and to the cultures of Spanish-speaking countries in Latin America, a

style which has been somewhat under-represented in our recent seasons. One might think that selecting a program from the rich number of works in this idiom would be a snap. However, what might appear simple on the surface is a good deal more difficult in practice.

I often try to combine the familiar with the less familiar when creating programs. However, as it turns out, the music with Spanish/Latin characteristics that is most familiar to general symphony orchestra audiences is not by indigenous Spanish/Latin composers at all! Chabrier (*España*), Rimsky-Korsakov (*Capriccio espagnol*), and Bernstein ("Mambo") are composers from France, Russia, and Brooklyn (respectively) who wrote well known music with a Spanish influence. (The less familiar works on our concert are those by Latin Americans such as Ginastera and Moncayo).

Thus it became evident that in addition to familiar vs. "unfamiliar" there is also the dimension of "authenticity." Some of the characteristics of authentic Spanish/Latin music include a strong dance element (with its associated rhythmic vitality), extensive use of percussion instruments, and frequently changing time signatures in the meter. However, there is no precise line of demarcation between "authentic" and "inauthentic" because composers do not work in a vacuum.

For example, when you listen to Rimsky's *Capriccio espagnol* you will hear brilliant orchestration, lots of percussion, including castanets and tambourines, and melodies that sound Spanish, and even harmonies that are often heard in flamenco guitar pieces, due to the ease in which those harmonies can be created on the guitar. But at its conclusion, you feel like you have heard a Russian piece "in the style of Spanish music," albeit by a master of orchestration. On the other hand, when you hear the Rodrigo *Concierto de Aranjuez* or Ginastera's *Estancia* or Moncayo's *Huapango* you hear harmonies and rhythms which do not sound like traditional European music at all, but evoke a very pure Spanish/Latin style.

I don't think it has as much to do with where the composers are from geographically as how ingrained the style is in their being based upon their musical experience. If nothing else, this range of musical styles, I'm sure, will bring a varied, interesting, and enjoyable concert!



—Lawrence Eckerling

Music Director, Evanston Symphony Orchestra

## Musical Insights — The WIN-WIN becomes a Trifecta!

Whether you attend Musical Insights to get a glimpse of the concert to come, or to enjoy the perspective of gifted musicians (even though you may be unable to attend the full performance two days later) you are the lucky winner of a great mid-day interlude! ESO Maestro Lawrence Eckerling shares his fantastic gifts as conductor and interpreter of musical masterworks, discussing the various themes and structure of the selection, and highlights of different movements. He demonstrates many of his points using his terrific talent as a pianist.

ESO General Manager David Ellis shares the depth and breadth of his vast knowledge of musical history and historic performances, providing social context, composer background, composition insights, then illustrating all this with brief clips of outstanding performances of the featured opus. Finally, the headliner soloist (this time, guitarist Jason Blair Lewis) shares his or her talent with a sneak preview of the work to be presented, and/or perhaps a short related work by the same composer. It's a chance to see and hear the soloist in a more intimate setting, reminiscent of a salon performance. A brief Q & A allows the Musical Insights audience to engage in the discussion; light

refreshments after the presentation provide the opportunity to continue the conversation one-on-one with these very knowledgeable and talented musical inspirations! And this month offers an **added bonus** as Julie Fischer, ESO concertmaster, discusses and shares her insights about Piazzolla's *Oblivion* to be featured in the program on Sunday, February 4.

**Truly a WIN-WIN** — It all adds up to an interesting and enjoyable way to enhance your appreciation of the concert to come, or an informative presentation and demonstration of some of the great masterpieces of the symphonic library. **Friday, February 2nd at 1:30 pm in the Crystal Ballroom at The Merion (1611 Chicago Avenue)** offers you the chance to be a part the next WIN-WIN Musical Insights!



*Julie Fischer, Concertmaster of the ESO, will preview her solo role in Piazzolla's Oblivion in the February 4 concert by performing it at Musical Insights on February 2. Lawrence Eckerling will accompany her on piano and they will also offer a special encore of Sarasate's Introduction et Tarantelle.*



# Neurology + Skateboarding + Guitar = Jason Blair Lewis



This unusual equation streams across each frame of a video about Jason Blair Lewis and is the perfect summation of this talented young classical guitarist.

Jason, who describes himself as "a half-black, half-Jewish neuroscience and classical guitar major at the University of Southern California," is the younger son of financial advisors Wade and Elaine Lewis of Glencoe. He says their family was not particularly musical, although his father played the trumpet through high school. There was, however, one notable musical event: on August 28, 1963, Jason's grandmother, Ms. Pearl Lewis, was part of a women's choir that sang at the March on Washington where Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. gave his inspiring "I Have a Dream" speech. (See *KidNotes* at our concert for more on that day from Ms. Lewis.)

Fast forward: when Jason's older brother, Aaron, was three, he found a toy guitar in the basement. His interest was such that their parents thought he might like music lessons, and the only instrument the Music Institute of Chicago taught to three-year-olds was indeed guitar. Jason tagged along to his brother's lessons until he reached the magic age of three and could finally start guitar lessons himself.

Jason liked the guitar and practiced (sometimes), but it was just something he did, like skateboarding and homework. Then came his freshman year at New Trier and a chance encounter with a poster for Interlochen Arts Academy. As Jason puts it, he fell in love with Interlochen and, without telling his parents, began practicing at least two hours a day so he could apply for admission; by the end of the year, he had also fallen in love with his instrument. Then it was time to convince his parents that this was what he wanted to do and to convince Interlochen that he played well enough to be admitted. Victory on both fronts!

Interlochen to Jason was "magical, a special atmosphere." There were few distractions and the immersion environment was perfect for him. At the end of his first year, however, his guitar instructor, Dr. Michael Kudirka, accepted a position at the North Carolina University School of the Arts High School beginning in the fall of 2013. Jason was faced with a tough decision: should he stay at Interlochen, a place he dearly loved? or should he follow his mentor to Winston-Salem? Jason chose North Carolina, a decision he appreciates because he could continue his studies with Dr. Kudirka, but he still has pangs of regret about leaving magical Interlochen.

Jason is now in his third year of a five-year program at USC as a double major in classical guitar and computational neuroscience. While most of us understand "classical guitar," "computational neuroscience" is probably another matter entirely. Jason describes it as the overlapping of

computer science and biology; it uses math, computer science, computer models of the brain, and artificial neural networks to figure out what's going on in the brain, how neurons interact. He says it's the new wave of neuroscience and calls it "awesome!"

When Jason was 13 and Aaron 15, they joined forces as the Lewis Duo, playing at various functions, but had to put the Duo on hold when Aaron went off to Yale. He now has a job in Silicon Valley, however, and the brothers get together whenever possible, even reactivating the Lewis Duo upon occasion.

As for skateboarding, Jason says he spent almost as much time practicing on his skateboard during his year at New Trier as he did practicing on his guitar. He thinks the techniques and the dedication to each go hand in hand and that he can learn something about each one from the other. When playing his guitar, he must visualize the note as sound, how he wants his guitar to sound and thus how his fingers need to move. When trying a maneuver on his skateboard, he must visualize what's going to happen, how he's got to move his body to make the board respond in a specific way. And, he needs to do it over and over again, whether a riff or a jump. In fact, he once kept skateboarding with a broken ankle, working through the pain. His philosophy then was "It's my life and I'll roll with it." He adds that it took a bit of time for him to mature: he now wears gloves to protect his hands, especially his fingers, and a helmet.

In addition to studying classical guitar and neuroscience, Jason likes to paint, draw and write. He's written some short stories and poetry — he performed one of his poems to music on NPR's *From the Top* — and is working on a novel. When listening to music, he chooses mainly classical — he loves Mozart — but likes good mainstream music as well, including hip-hop, especially Chance the Rapper.

Jason will be performing Rodrigo's *Concierto de Aranjuez*, a piece of music that is very special to him. When he was at New Trier, it was playing constantly through his headphones as he walked to the bus stop every morning, dreaming of performing it. At Interlochen, it was the first piece Dr. Kudirka recommended he learn, one that garnered Jason first prize in the strings division of the annual Walgreens National Concerto Competition. Jason says that, as he has matured, his interpretation of the *Aranjuez* has also matured, particularly in the second movement, where rising harmonics commemorating the loss of Rodrigo's first child bring it to a beautiful close. Its poignancy is breath-taking.

"Neurology + Skateboarding + Guitar = Jason Blair Lewis" Indeed the perfect summation of an extraordinary young man, one we are delighted to welcome to our stage!

—Kelly Brest van Kempen



PHOTO STRIKE 2 PHOTOGRAPHY

The Evanston Dance Ensemble tap-danced accompanied by the Evanston Symphony Orchestra

## Tap-dancing reindeer make a come-back!

Our auditorium was full of holiday joys on December 10 when the Evanston Symphony Orchestra played its annual Holiday Concert. Audience members, young and old, were delighted with the return of the tap-dancing reindeer from the Evanston Dance Ensemble, and the glorious snowflake dancers, dancing to Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker* ballet music had many young dancers-to-be twirling in their seats. The Evanston Symphony Holiday Gospel Choir sang The Temptations' arrangement of *Silent Night*, accompanied by the full orchestra, in a brand-new orchestration of this special carol. The North Shore Choral Society and Evanston Children's Choir also sang with the full orchestra and, in another first, Julia Davids, artistic director of North Shore Choral Society, sang solo extracts from Handel's *Messiah*. The finale of the concert was a performance of 'Hallelujah' from Quincy Jones' *Handel's Messiah: A Soulful Celebration* with the three choirs and full orchestra that brought the audience to its feet. What a great way to showcase the immense diversity and creativity that Evanston has! 



PHOTO STRIKE 2 PHOTOGRAPHY

The North Shore Choral Society joins the Evanston Symphony Orchestra in performing Hallelujah Chorus



PHOTO STRIKE 2 PHOTOGRAPHY

Evanston Symphony Gospel Choir with the Evanston Children's Choir



## EVANSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

### Join the KeyNote Society *and leave a musical legacy*

The Evanston Symphony Orchestra recognizes and honors individuals who have generously provided for its future through bequests, trusts, and other life income gifts as members of the KeyNote Society. Membership in the KeyNote Society is a reflection of the highest individual commitment to the future of the Evanston Symphony Orchestra. KeyNote Society members establish their personal legacy by continuing the musical tradition of the ESO and maintaining its musical heritage in our community.

The Evanston Symphony Orchestra would like to thank the following KeyNote Society members:

Anonymous  
Sarah Bernauer  
Margaret Bernstorff \*  
Suzanne M. and Vincent P. Flood  
Leonard Foster \*  
H. Frederick Greene  
Casimir Lelewski \*  
Barbara McCarthy \*  
Jennifer McGeary  
Toby and Penelope Sachs  
Mary Lou Vervoulen \*

\* Deceased

The ESO thanks the estate of Mary Lou Vervoulen, long-time ESO Subscriber, for a generous bequest.

