



KEYNOTES

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF
THE EVANSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

LAWRENCE ECKERLING, MUSIC DIRECTOR

Dvořák Cello Concerto

Our May concert opens with the delayed local premiere of a consortium commission (see Maestro Eckerling's article on the next page for much more on the consortium) followed by two favorites from the Romantic era. The premiere is that of *Transcend*, a 20 minute orchestral piece commissioned by the Reno Philharmonic, the Evanston Symphony Orchestra, and 11 other orchestras. The three movements of *Transcend* are titled "Pulse," "Promise," and "D-O-N-E" and collectively commemorate the completion of the transcontinental railroad and honor the Chinese and Irish immigrants who suffered in its construction. The composer, Zhou Tian (b.1981), was born in China and now teaches at Michigan State University.

The overture-fantasy *Romeo and Juliet* by Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840–1893) contains one of the best known love themes in all of music. But there is much to this overture beyond its lyricism—the opening theme representing Friar Laurence, the exciting tumultuous passages depicting the conflict between the Montagues and the Capulets, and the ending transfiguration of the love theme. First composed in 1869, this was Tchaikovsky's first "big hit;" the version played by everyone, including the ESO, is his revision of 1880.

Our concert concludes with the greatest of concertos for cello and orchestra, that of Antonín Dvořák (1841–1904). This was last of the approximately ten works which Dvořák composed during his visits to the U.S. between 1892 and 1895 (the "New World" Symphony was the first of the ten), although he revised the end of the concerto following his return to Bohemia in the spring of 1895. It is notable for its lack of a cadenza, that showy passage typically near the end of a movement in which the soloist gets to display their virtuosity. In fact, Dvořák specifically

SUNDAY, MAY 22 — 2:30 PM

DVOŘÁK CELLO CONCERTO

forbade the insertion of a cadenza in the third and final movement as requested by the cellist Hanus Wihan, the dedicatee and technical advisor for the concerto.

Dvořák's revision of the finale and his refusal of a cadenza was caused by the death of his sister-in-law, Josephina, in May 1895. While an impoverished student in the 1860's, Dvorak had given piano lessons to Josephina and her younger sister, Anna. Josephina rejected his love in favor of a wealthy count, and Dvořák eventually married Anna, but remained close to Josephina. One of his *Four Songs*, Op. 82, was a particular favorite of Josephina's, and he inserted a brief allusion to it in his revised finale just where Wihan wanted his cadenza. Dvořák had already quoted this song more extensively in the middle of the slow second movement after he learned that her heart condition was worsening, so recent scholarship views the end of this magnificent concerto as a memorial to Dvořák's lost love. 🎻

—David Ellis



MUSICAL INSIGHTS

FRIDAY, MAY 20, 2022
1:30 PM

FREE

OPEN TO THE
PUBLIC

MEET ZHOU TIAN AND
ARLEN HLUSKO

1611 CHICAGO AVE., EVANSTON
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BEHIND THE SCENES



One of my greatest pleasures as Music Director of the ESO is performing new music. It is important to perform new music because new music creation is how the art thrives. One of the greatest innovations in the orchestral music field is that of consortium projects. A consortium is essentially a “group commission” of a new work by multiple organizations.

In the past a single orchestra would commission a composer for a work of a specific duration and orchestration. The fee for this composition was usually quite expensive; thus only large orchestras could contribute to bringing new works to the artform. The big premiere happened with lots of fanfare and publicity. But then, composers had great difficulty getting a second performance. And an even greater difficulty getting a third performance. When works don't get played repeatedly not enough people hear them, and they don't get a chance to enter the repertory.

Enter the idea of a consortium. The composer does the same amount of work and gets the same compensation for his/her work. However, instead of one orchestra footing the bill, many orchestras contribute to the cost of the commission. That allows smaller orchestras to also contribute to bringing music to life. And every orchestra that participates performs the work.

The first major consortium was sponsored by Ford and called “Made In America.” Their goal was to get one orchestra in each of the 50 states, with 50 performances. The ESO was one of them, and we premiered Joan Tower's *Made in America* in February 2006. Ford sponsored one more national consortium and in February 2009 we gave the Chicago area premiere of Joseph Schwanter's *Chasing Light*. . . . Economic conditions then forced a reduction in consortium size, and our next participation was part of the “New Music for America” commission of Christopher Theofanidis' *Dreamtime Ancestors*, for which we gave the Illinois premiere in February 2016.

And now, after two years of COVID delays, we are delighted to play Zhou Tian's *Transcend*, commissioned by a consortium led by the Reno Philharmonic. It is extremely rewarding to perform this wonderful piece, and I'm thrilled to be performing it now with the Evanston Symphony Orchestra. The composer will be present for Musical Insights on May 20 and our concert on May 22. I look forward to seeing you there!

P.S. And if you look at the flap of this newsletter you can see that next April 2023 we will be playing the Illinois premiere of our fifth consortium commission, the orchestral suite from Jennifer Higdon's opera *Cold Mountain*. 🎵

—Lawrence Eckerling
Music Director, Evanston Symphony Orchestra

Musical Insights is generously sponsored by The Merion. **We appreciate their continuing support. Please read about what The Merion has to offer.**

The Merion is Evanston's premier senior living. Located in downtown Evanston, just a few blocks from Lake Michigan, the community offers an opportunity to retire in style, in a setting where your neighbors are your friends, and new opportunities to enjoy life are around every corner. The Merion features well-appointed apartment homes along with many on-site amenities, including indoor swimming, lounges and restaurants, a fitness center, rooftop terrace and lots more.

The Merion is a historical landmark in Evanston, opening its doors in 1919 as the North Shore Hotel. Beginning in 2014, extensive renovation and construction work

transformed the community into a modern, luxury senior community without sacrificing the historical charm. Along with the renovation, the site was christened with a new name, paying homage to the S.S. Merion, an ocean liner used by the current ownership's family as they traveled to the U.S. in 1911.

Residents at The Merion take advantage of the myriad opportunities to exercise, to learn, to create, and to socialize. Whether taking in live music, learning to play a new game, or taking a leisurely stroll through downtown Evanston, residents at The Merion maximize their free time. Along with all those things, The Merion offers on-site professional management, 24-7 front desk associates, and systems in place to keep you safe and well.

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THE MERION

Meet Cellist Arlen Hlusko

Arlen Hlusko grew up in rural Lowville, Ontario, a village about 40 miles from Toronto, and says her family wasn't at all musical. Her parents are both veterinarians (dad, large animals; mom, pets) and the cello was not part of the picture. However, her mother had a friend, a pianist, with whom she took turns providing child care. The friend wanted her son to learn the cello and it just made sense for Arlen to learn that instrument at the same time. She was all of four years old; her first cello was about the size of a viola, but with an end pin, and it was a love affair from the very beginning. Arlen never had to make a career choice. The cello chose her.

As a young teen, Arlen participated in the Morningside summer program in Calgary, Alberta, and had classes with cellist John Kadz, faculty member of the School of Creative and Performing Arts, University of Calgary. Recognizing her talent, Kadz encouraged her to come study cello with him in Calgary, where Arlen and her now full-sized cello moved when she was 14. After studying with Kadz and graduating from high school, Arlen spent two years at the Colburn School in Los Angeles, then headed to Philadelphia to study at the Curtis Institute of Music.

While she benefitted very much from her two years at Colburn and could have transferred credits to Curtis, Arlen says that she opted to "restart from scratch so I could spend more time at Curtis!" This decision

served her well; among other honors, she received the prestigious Jacqueline du Pré Memorial Fellowship, which she describes as "a great experience."

Another honor came Arlen's way when she was chosen as a 2015–16 Curtis ArtistYear Fellow. ArtistYear, now a program of AmeriCorps, allows young artists to dedicate a year of community service to the arts. Arlen chose to spend her year finding meaningful ways through music to reach individuals with autism and dementia, mainly focusing on communities that have limited access to the arts. Her inspiration for this area of service came from reading works by renowned neurologist and author Oliver Sacks, particularly his *Musophilia: Tales of Music and the Brain*, in which he discusses the effect of music on, among others, people with Alzheimer's disease and dementia.

Arlen describes her ArtistYear experience as "a miraculous year" in which working several days a week in these communities gave her "a whole different view on why music is necessary" in the lives of all people, particularly those with dementia or on the autism spectrum. Through this "miraculous year," she forged partnerships with the Penn Memory Center and Children's Hospital of Philadelphia and, as a continuation of some of this work, won a 2016 Tarisio Trust Young Artist Grant to found her series, *Philadelphia Performances for Autism*.



In addition to her competence with the classical repertoire, Arlen has just been named cellist for Bang on a Can All Stars, a group founded in 1992 to explore new classical music, an interest of hers since her days at Curtis. The *New York Times* describes the All Stars as a "fiercely aggressive group, combining the power and punch of a rock band with the precision and clarity of a chamber ensemble." Arlen and the All Stars spent a week in April recording an album to be released in the next few months.

When not performing or teaching in North America or abroad, Arlen divides her time between Philadelphia and New York, where she actively maintains private studios. She currently serves as Teaching Artist at Carnegie Hall, working with the Ensemble Connect program to bring music to grades 1–5 in a Brooklyn public school. The ESO is delighted to welcome this impressive, award-winning, community-minded young cellist to our stage. You can read more about Arlen's stellar music career at www.arlenhlusko.com. 🎻

—Kelly Brest van Kempen

Meet Composer Zhou Tian



Chinese-American composer Zhou Tian (*JOH TEE-en*) seeks inspiration from different cultures and strives to mix them seamlessly into a musically satisfying combination for performers and audience alike. His Concerto for Orchestra—commissioned and recorded by the Cincinnati Symphony and Music Director Louis

Langrée—earned him a GRAMMY Award nomination for Best Contemporary Classical Composition in 2018. His new work *Transcend*, commissioned by 13 American orchestras (including the Evanston Symphony)

commemorating the 150th anniversary of the Transcontinental Railroad's completion, has been performed across the U.S. and received warm critical acclaim.

Born in 1981, Zhou came of age in a new China marked by economic reforms, and was in the United States by his 19th birthday. Trained at the Curtis Institute of Music, Juilliard School and University of Southern California, he studied with some of America's finest composers, such as Jennifer Higdon, Christopher Rouse and Stephen Hartke. He is associate professor of composition at Michigan State University College of Music. We are deeply gratified that he has consented to appear at our Musical Insights program on May 20 and at our May 22nd concert. 🎻



EVANSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Lawrence Eckerling, Music Director

2022–2023 CONCERT SERIES

Spotlight on Women Artists

OCTOBER 30, 2022

WEST SIDE STORY/
PRICE 3

BERNSTEIN

*Symphonic Dances from
West Side Story*

RACHMANINOFF

Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini
Inna Faliks, *piano*

PRICE

Symphony No. 3 in C Minor

FEBRUARY 12, 2023

MAHLER 1

MOZART

Overture to The Marriage of Figaro

PROKOFIEV

Violin Concerto No. 2 in G Minor
Irina Muresanu, *violin*

MAHLER

Symphony No. 1 in D Major

APRIL 2, 2023

TCHAIKOVSKY FIRST
PIANO CONCERTO

HIGDON

Suite from Cold Mountain
ILLINOIS PREMIERE

TCHAIKOVSKY

Piano Concerto No.1 in B Flat Minor
Kariné Poghosyan, *piano*

MENDELSSOHN

Symphony No. 5 in D Major
“Reformation”

MAY 14, 2023

PICTURES AT AN
EXHIBITION

BERLIOZ

Roman Carnival Overture

TCHAIKOVSKY

Violin Concerto in D Major
Maya Anjali Buchanan, *violin*

MUSSORGSKY (ORCH. RAVEL)

Pictures at an Exhibition

Concert Venue

Subscription Series Concerts take place on Sundays at 2:30 p.m. in Pick-Staiger Concert Hall,
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