



KEYNOTES

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF
THE EVANSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

LAWRENCE ECKERLING, MUSIC DIRECTOR

West Side Story/Rachmaninoff/Price 3

Welcome to the opening concert of the Evanston Symphony Orchestra, now recovered from the pandemic, back in full force, and ready to bring you a 76th season filled with wonderful music! This year shines a “Spotlight on Women Artists” with two concerts highlighting works by women composers and each concert featuring a woman soloist. Our October concert opens with Leonard Bernstein’s *Symphonic Dances* from *West Side Story* followed by Rachmaninoff’s *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini* with pianist favorite Inna Faliks. Ms. Faliks was to have been our soloist in May of 2020, but that concert had to be cancelled because of the pandemic; we are very happy she could make time to perform with the ESO this season! The final piece on our program is the glorious *Symphony No. 3 in C Minor* by African-American composer Florence Price. Price composed her work in 1938 under a commission from the Works Progress Administration’s Federal Music Project during the height of the Great Depression—and during the height of the Chicago Black Renaissance, a powerful movement of Black artists and writers as well as musicians as diverse as Thomas A. Dorsey, Louis Armstrong, Earl Hines and Mahalia Jackson.

We’re delighted to welcome back our longtime ESO subscribers and deeply appreciate your continued support during the dark months of 2020–21. And, we’re equally delighted to welcome our new subscribers; you’re in for a season of great music from one of the best community orchestras in the country! We should note here, however, that your tickets may be a bit late in arriving due to the heartbreaking loss of our extraordinary General Manager, David Ellis, in July. We are working hard to fulfill the many tasks David performed but if you have not received your tickets by October 23rd, please call or email and we’ll arrange to get your tickets to you. (By the way, if you have friends who come to the concert but aren’t yet subscribers, remind them that they can apply the price of this concert ticket to a full season subscription. Subscribers get the best prices and the best seats for every performance—and those seats can be guaranteed

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 30

— 2:30 PM

WEST SIDE
STORY/PRICE 3



from year to year. See the outside flap of this *Keynotes* for more information.)

You may have noticed that we said our “opening” concert for this 76th season rather than our “first” concert. That designation belongs to the ESO’s summer pops concert on August 24, when 1,200 people came to Wilmette’s Gillson Park for an evening of fun musical favorites in celebration of Wilmette’s 150th Anniversary. This was the second summer in a row we presented an outdoor pops concert and we’re hoping to make it an annual event.

While we would like to think that we are “post-COVID,” that is, unfortunately, not the case. In line with current recommendations, we will continue to require patrons to show an ID and up-to-date vaccination card upon entering Pick-Staiger Concert Hall and to wear a mask. Please note also that children five and over are welcome at the concert as well provided that they also have a current vaccination card and wear a mask.

Finally, if you’d like an appetizer before the main course, come to our *free* “Musical Insights” program on the Friday afternoon before each concert. Information for this concert is below. 📶

—Kelly Brest van Kempen



MUSICAL INSIGHTS

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 28, 2022

1:30 PM

FREE

MEET INNA FALIKS

OPEN TO THE
PUBLIC

1611 CHICAGO AVE., EVANSTON
PLEASE RSVP TO 847-570-7815

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THE EVANSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA USES THE POWER OF MUSIC TO LIFT THE HUMAN SPIRIT. WE ENGAGE AND ENRICH THE COMMUNITY BY COMING TOGETHER TO PERFORM, INSPIRE AND EDUCATE. *For more information on ESO concerts and events, please contact Fiona Queen, Interim 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



It is part of the job of any musician, and particularly any music director of an ensemble, to explore music that we haven't heard before—not only unfamiliar music by composers we already know and not only unfamiliar styles of music, but also music by composers in certain minorities who have been too long neglected.

It seems the entire classical music industry made the time to put these explorations in high gear when we had to shut down due to the Covid pandemic. I certainly did the same. I started this project with some doubts about what I would find, only to be wonderfully surprised. There is a huge amount of classical music by African-American composers. The quantity is staggering and there were great delights to discover in much of this music. However, with SO much music out there and almost none of it ever being performed on a regular basis, it is just *not* possible that this absence from the concert stage was an accident and not a situation where the “best just rose to the top.” No, there have to be other reasons. Racism (subtle as it might be in this context) has to be part of it, but there are other considerations as well. I think one of them is that, since the music is virtually unknown to most classical music audiences, there is a worry by programmers that people might not buy tickets to an unknown symphony. In a sense, this mind-set has become a self-fulfilling prophecy, to the detriment of minority composers.

In setting out to explore new music, I kept remembering Leonard Bernstein's comment about Gershwin's *Rhapsody In Blue*, a piece that is often criticized for its structure and form, but yet is beloved by the public

anyway. He said, “It's not what's wrong with the *Rhapsody*, but rather what is RIGHT with the *Rhapsody*.” While keeping those thoughts in mind, I wanted to make sure that I was spending less time comparing this music to other music that I knew and instead tried to hear what these particular composers were expressing, on their own terms.

And this brings me to Florence Price and her Symphony No. 3. I found Price's symphony to be simultaneously rooted in a traditional European style, and yet with a distinctive voice infused with Negro Spiritual sensitivity, Blues and, in the third movement, a Scott Joplin-like “Juba Dance,” a style that originated in Central Africa, and was brought by enslaved Africans to Charleston, South Carolina, around 1840. Price's Symphony No. 3 is a rich piece—a very *American* piece—and deserves to be heard in concert halls around the world.

The ESO is proud to make Florence Price's Symphony No. 3 the centerpiece of the first concert of our 2022–23 season. I am certain that you will enjoy hearing the uniqueness of Ms. Price's musical language. And to the worry that audiences might not come to hear an unknown symphony, I've rounded out the program with Bernstein's “Symphonic Dances from *West Side Story*” and Rachmaninoff's *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini*. You may come to this concert because you love two of the pieces of music on the program, but you'll go home loving all three!

I hope to see you there! 🎧

—Lawrence Eckerling
Music Director, Evanston Symphony Orchestra



Musical Insights

A free pre-concert event at The Merion
Friday, October 28, 1:30 PM

Enhance your concert experience with a sneak preview. Composers come alive and their passions take center stage when ESO Maestro Lawrence Eckerling takes you on an insider's tour of the history and highlights behind the music. Meet our soloist, Inna Faliks, at Musical Insights. She and our Maestro Lawrence Eckerling will explore the concert program in depth.

Light refreshments will be served and casual tours of apartments will be available after the program. 🎧

THE MERION

Merion's Crystal Ballroom at
1611 Chicago Ave. at Davis St., Evanston.
FREE and open to the public.
Please RSVP to 847-570-7815.



In Memoriam

David Ellis

The entire Evanston Symphony family mourns the loss of our extraordinary longtime General Manager, David Ellis, who died from heart complications on July 26. An article about

David will be in the *Keynotes* for our February 12, 2023 concert, which will be dedicated to his memory. More information about David's life is available on our website at evanstonsymphony.org/content/david-ellis-treasure. 🎧

Meet Inna Faliks, Pianist Extraordinaire



For many musicians, there comes a moment of decision; do I want to make my instrument my career? For Inna Faliks, the answer was never in doubt!

Born in Odessa, Ukraine, Inna began piano lessons at age five. Her mother, also a pianist, was her first teacher, and it soon became clear that she had a prodigy on her hands: her child was practicing many hours a day, was composing music (including an opera), and was soon performing in public.

When Inna was ten, her family immigrated to Chicago, where she studied with renowned pianist Emilio del Rosario at the Music Institute of Chicago. Inna calls del Rosario the “guiding star” of her professional life because he recognized her talent and pushed her to develop it to its fullest. After earning her BM, MM and graduate diploma in piano performance at the Peabody Conservatory, followed by an artistic diploma in Italy, Inna earned a Doctorate in Musical Arts from SUNY Stony Brook. Her academic record and her stellar concert career led to an offer from UCLA, where she is now a full Professor and Head of Piano.

One of Inna’s ongoing projects is *Music/Words*, her award-winning interdisciplinary series that creates performances in collaboration with distinguished poets; it’s a perfect pairing of music and poetry that has been described as “surreal, impactful, and relevant” (Lucid Culture). Her longstanding relationship with WFMT has led to yearly broadcasts of *Music/Words*, which she produces, as well as presentations with Pianoforte Chicago in collaboration with the Poetry Foundation.

In addition to pairing music and poetry in performance, Inna has written *Polonaise Fantasie: Story of a Pianist*, which “tells her own story through a unique blending of music and words.” Released in 2017, her

“acclaimed interpretations of Bach, Mozart and Chopin, as well as new compositions, including her own, illuminate her dramatic story.” Interwoven with the music, an actress tells the story of Inna’s life: of being a child prodigy, of coming to the U.S. to escape anti-Semitism, of pursuing her dream of becoming a concert pianist. “Musically and personally, I am very much a communicator,” Inna says. “And constantly searching for roots and for meaning through music is another way to communicate with the world around you.”

Since her last appearance with the ESO in 2016, Inna has added to her versatile body of work with a strong commitment to contemporary music, to little-known music of classical composers, and to music reflecting the Jewish experience. In *Reimagine: Beethoven and Ravel*, released in June of 2021, nine contemporary composers responded to Beethoven’s *Bagatelles* and Ravel’s *Gaspard de la Nuit* with new compositions. Inna says she is “very proud” of this project and the recording has received enthusiastic reviews, including that of the ESO’s Maestro Lawrence Eckerling.

Also released in 2021 was *The Schumann Project, Vol 1*, which notes that “Clara Schumann’s beautiful G minor sonata, though unpublished until 1991 and rarely played, is a powerful testament to her profound gifts as a pianist composer.” Inna also gave the North American premiere of Ilya Levinson’s *Shtetle Suite* and the world premiere of Ljova’s “Sirota for piano and historical recording,” which was composed for her and includes recordings of the voice of Cantor Gershon Sirota in Warsaw in 1908. Sirota perished in the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in 1943. (“Sirota” is a family name, but also means “orphan” in Russian.) Ljova’s “Voices” was commissioned for her by the Milken Center of American Jewish Music Experience in 2020.

In an interview with the UCLA Newsroom in 2021, Inna said that “meeting my husband... helped me connect to many parts of Jewish culture that had been dormant, and to become more familiar with Middle Eastern history and the sound of the Hebrew language and Yiddish language. We are not religious, but we certainly feel ourselves to be part of Jewish culture.” Inna’s story of meeting her husband has a bit of a fairytale ring to it. When she was a child in Odessa, she and her best friend had bonded over a book they both loved, *The Master and Margarita* by Mikhail Bulgakov. But with the rise of anti-Semitism in Ukraine, then still under Soviet influence, their families decided to immigrate, hers to the U.S. and his to Israel. And that was that—until years later, when that boy, now a grown man, re-read their favorite book and was inspired to track down his childhood best friend, who became his best friend once again. They have two children ages 11 and 8.

The bright success of Inna’s career has been tinged this past year by two dark events. One was the unprovoked invasion of Ukraine by Russia, an event she describes as “a very difficult, horrible time—a travesty and a tragedy.” She is raising funds for Ukrainian relief through her music. The other event was the death last November of Inna’s beloved mother, Irene, a longtime and well-respected faculty member at the Music Institute of Chicago. Rachmaninoff’s *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini* was one of her mother’s favorite piano pieces and Inna is dedicating her performance in our concert to her mother’s memory. The Evanston Symphony is also dedicating its entire concert to the people of Ukraine.

For more about Inna, see innafaliks.com. 🎧

—Kelly Brest van Kempen

Meet Fiona Queen



The ESO is delighted to welcome our new Interim General Manager, Fiona Queen. Fiona brings an impressive resume of professional experience, coupled with a wealth of musical talent that will be a great gift to the orchestra association during this time of transition. For the past 18 years, Fiona was with the Music Institute of Chicago in Evanston as the Director of Performance Activities—planning, coordinating and over-

seeing all aspects of programming and operations for Nichols Concert Hall and Puth Family Theater. Concurrently, Fiona has served as Administrator of the Solti Foundation, based in Chicago, and as Operations Manager for The Bach Week Festival, a long-standing Evanston tradition. She is an accomplished musician, holding a Bachelor of Music from Boston University and a Master of Music from Northwestern University, both in Piano Performance. Since 1995, Fiona has been a substitute pianist for the Grant Park Symphony Orchestra. Welcome, Fiona! 🎧



The Evanston Symphony Orchestra celebrate's Wilmette's 150th birthday with a free outdoor concert

ESO Summer Concert—Wilmette

August 24 was a perfect summer evening for the ESO's summer pops concert celebrating the Village of Wilmette's 150th Anniversary and 1,200 people of all ages came to the Wallace Bowl in Gillson Park to join in the celebration. The ESO trumpet section thrilled listeners with its rousing performance of Leroy Anderson's *Bugler's Holiday* and children danced on the grass to tunes from Lerner & Loewe's *My Fair Lady*. Other audience favorites were the *Die Fledermaus* Overture, the Flying Scene from *E.T.*, Darth Vader's theme from *Star Wars*, three movements from the delightful cowboy ballet, *Rodeo*, and a spirited rendition of Sousa's *Washington Post March* for the finale. We thank our generous sponsors, Wilmette 150, Byline Bank and the Mabadi Group, and our event partners, the Wilmette Park District and Baker Demonstration School, which provided activities for children. 🎵



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A Perfect Way to Start the Holidays for the Whole Family: Celebrate with Music and Santa on December 11 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 on December 11, 3 p.m., at Evanston Township High School's main auditorium. And this concert is all about our community. We welcome singers and dancers from all over Evanston to come together to celebrate the season. Nowhere else in Evanston can you celebrate the holidays with over 250 performers on stage who truly represent our community.

The full Evanston Symphony Orchestra will be joined by the North Shore Choral Society, Evanston Dance Ensemble, Chicago Ballet Arts, Evanston Children's Choir, and our very own Evanston Symphony Gospel Choir, led by Rev. Ken Cherry, and, of course, Santa! It will be a very special afternoon.



The Evanston Symphony Gospel Choir

December 11 is a perfect way to start the holidays for the whole family. Special family packages and all tickets are available on our website: evanstonsymphony.org, or simply use the ticket order form on the outside flap, or call 847-864-8804. Our vaccination and mask policy is also available on the website. 🎵

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Chicago Ballet Arts dancing Hely-Hutchinson's Carol Symphony accompanied by the ESO

PHOTO BY STRIKE 2 PHOTOGRAPHY

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The ESO thanks you for your support. All contributions are tax deductible and will be listed in the concert program.

For more information on ESO concerts and events, please contact us, at (847) 864-8804 or visit evanstonsymphony.org.