



KEYNOTES

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF
THE EVANSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

LAWRENCE ECKERLING, MUSIC DIRECTOR

Soaring Sax and Dvořák's 8th

Join us on Sunday, June 2 for the final concert of our 2023–2024 season. Paul Dukas' *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*, Antonin Dvořák's Slavonic Dance Op. 46 No. 1 and Symphony No. 8 in G Major, and Henri Tomasi's Saxophone Concerto featuring soloist Steven Banks are on the program.

French composer Paul Dukas (1865–1935) is best known for a single orchestral work, *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*. Based on a 1797 poem by Wolfgang von Goethe, the piece was written in 1897 and premiered later that same year in Paris with Dukas himself conducting the performance. The piece was an instant hit. Fast forward to 1940 when the movie *Fantasia* was released, and it became even more widely known thanks to a certain mouse and his army of enchanted brooms. *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* is the most performed and recorded of Dukas' works.

Although Dukas composed a variety of other works, his collective output of compositions remained small including an opera, symphony, ballet, and works for solo piano, among others. Dukas was very self-critical and therefore abandoned or destroyed many of his pieces.

Henri Tomasi (1901–1971) composed the Saxophone Concerto in 1949, dedicating it to Marcel Mule, a renowned French saxophonist who was instrumental in popularizing the instrument in classical music circles. Mule was responsible for developing entire generations of classical saxophonists as the instructor for the newly re-established course at the Paris Conservatoire beginning in 1944, and Tomasi's dedication is a testament to their collaboration and friendship.

Tomasi, known for his eclectic style, infused the concerto with elements of both French and Mediterranean music. His Saxophone Concerto is celebrated for its technical demands and virtuosic passages, presenting a formidable challenge for saxophonists. From rapid arpeggios to

SUNDAY, JUNE 2

— 2:30 PM

**SOARING SAX
AND DVOŘÁK'S 8TH**



intricate ornamentation, the concerto pushes the boundaries of saxophone performance, showcasing the instrument's versatility and agility.

Czech composer Antonin Dvořák (1841–1904) won the Austrian State Prize for composition in 1874, with a jury that included Johannes Brahms. Among Dvořák's work submitted for the competition were his third and fourth symphonies. Brahms was "visibly overcome" by the "mastery and talent" of Dvořák.

During the summer of 1889, Dvořák started sketching ideas for his Eighth Symphony. Ideas came to him so quickly that he complained about not being able to get them down fast enough. Some of Dvořák's most gorgeous melodies are on full display in this symphony. While there are occasional dramatic outbursts, it invokes a pastoral world filled with Bohemian folk melodies that influenced much of Dvořák's work. His time in the countryside clearly influenced this exuberant piece as there's a feeling of the sheer joy of being alive in the natural world. 🎵



MUSICAL INSIGHTS

FRIDAY, MAY 31, 2024

1:30 PM

FREE
OPEN TO THE
PUBLIC

MEET STEVEN BANKS

**1611 CHICAGO AVE., EVANSTON
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This program is partially supported by a grant from the Illinois Arts Council through federal funds provided by the National Endowment for the Arts.



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BEHIND THE SCENES



IMAGE COURTESY OF MARC PERLISH PHOTOGRAPHY

Since my column for *Keynotes* is called “Behind The Scenes,” I thought I’d give you a sneak peak at what conductors often have to do when preparing to perform a piece of music.

Two of the works on the final concert of our 2023–24 season

are Dvořák’s Eighth Symphony and Dukas’ *The Sorcerer’s Apprentice*. Both pieces have problems to solve regarding the tempo, how fast or how slow a piece is played. This will probably be my fifth performance of the Dvořák Symphony and possibly my tenth performance of *The Sorcerer’s Apprentice*, and those issues still have to be reckoned with every time I revisit them.

Let’s look at the Dvořák Symphony. There are tempo indications in the score giving general instructions about how fast or how slow to play the piece as well as metronome markings giving very specific additional instructions. That should be the end of the story then, right? Wrong! The first thing you notice is that the printed metronome markings often have very little to do with how the piece is usually heard in live performances or on recordings. So you start checking the mental boxes in your mind (full of excuses). You might say, “The metronome Dvořák used was not calibrated correctly.” Or, “The master conductors who have recorded these pieces didn’t really care what

Dvořák wrote and just did what they wanted.” Then I found the manuscript, Dvořák’s original hand-written score of the piece, and you can see that, while the metronome marks were there, they were added in a different color, in blue, suggesting that the metronome markings were an afterthought and not actually done at the time of composition. Or “Were those added markings really by Dvořák?” Or then you might say, “Well, Dvořák’s concert halls, or the size of the orchestra was different, or…” etc. etc. etc. So, what to do?

Making decisions like these for every piece of music you perform is called “interpretation.” And it is not a “dirty word” synonymous with ignoring a composer’s intentions. Rather, it is an important word, one that facilitates bringing a piece of music to life in a way that is representative of that composer’s intentions.

It is my hope that you will listen to these pieces in a different way after having read this article. I look forward to seeing you on June 2nd! 🎶

—Lawrence Eckerling

Music Director, Evanston Symphony Orchestra

A longer version of this article is available on our website at evanstonsymphony.org.

2024–25 Season Filled With “Soul & Inspiration”

The works Music Director Lawrence Eckerling has programmed for the Evanston Symphony Orchestra’s 2024–2025 subscription concerts will inspire you and fill your soul. That’s why we gave the season, the ESO’s 78th, the theme of “Soul & Inspiration.” Whether it is



Jessie Montgomery

Brahms moving *German Requiem* with the North Shore Choral Society, Shostakovich’s powerful 5th symphony, Jessie Montgomery’s *Soul Force* or William Grant Still’s *Mother and Child*, your soul will be stirred, and the glorious music of these composers will inspire you.

Other concerts’ featured works include Elgar’s “Enigma Variations,” and a fascinating concert that contrasts the lush orchestrations of the French masters Debussy and Ravel with the brilliant American composers they influenced, Copland and Gershwin.

The season also showcases pieces by Northwestern University Bienen School of Music Dean and composer Jonathan Bailey Holland, Erich Wolfgang Korngold, Tchaikovsky, Mozart, and Beethoven.

All four programs are headlined by distinguished and popular soloists including violinist Maya Anjali Buchanan, cellist Christine Lamprea, pianist Ko-Eun Yi, and performing in both the Brahms *Requiem* and works

by Mozart, soprano Josefien Stoppelenburg and bass-baritone Evan Bravos.

You won’t want to miss a single concert of the elevating and eclectic 2024–25 season. The concert dates and programs are detailed elsewhere in “Keynotes.” Subscribe today to the ESO’s 2024–2025 concert season to find your own “soul & inspiration.” 🎶



Taimur Sullivan on Steven Banks

Steven Banks is one of the country's premier classical saxophonists, an emerging composer, and incoming Saxophone and Chamber Music Faculty and Artist-in-Residence at the Cleveland Institute of Music. We are delighted to welcome him as soloist for our June concert and will have an in-depth interview with him available then. In the meantime, we've had the great pleasure of talking with Taimur Sullivan, Professor of Saxophone at Northwestern University, a member of the acclaimed PRISM Quartet, and the person who was one of the first to recognize Steven's talents and set him on his current path.

Don't miss our June 2 concert with Tomasi's Saxophone Concerto lead by compelling soloist, Steven Banks, as well as the ESO's performance of Dvořák's magnificent Concerto No. 8.

About 15 years ago, Taimur Sullivan was teaching at the University of North Carolina School of the Arts in Winston-Salem and was part of a faculty outreach program giving free master's classes and clinics at area

high schools. In 2008 or so, they held a clinic at a high school in Clemmons, NC. Among the students was one particular stand-out, a 15-year-old sophomore who owned only a tenor saxophone but played repertoire composed for the alto sax. That stand-out was Steven Banks. Impressed by what he saw, Professor Sullivan encouraged Steven to audition for a place in the School of Arts high school program. Steven improvised on his sax during his audition; he entered the program as a high school junior. After graduating from the UNCSEA high school program, Steven went to the University of Indiana for his bachelor's degree and then to Northwestern for his master's. By

happy coincidence, Taimur Sullivan had just been appointed to his position at Northwestern and recruited his former student to join his first saxophone studio. Steven received his master's degree in 2017.

Since then, Steven's career has taken off in a way that Taimur Sullivan says is unlike anything seen before in the realm of the classical saxophone. "He's taking it to new heights. No soloist has achieved the level of activity and demand like Steven," said Sullivan, who then went on to talk about his former student's ground-breaking awards: Steven was the first saxophonist to be awarded First Prize at the Young Concert Artists Susan Wadsworth International Auditions, which he received in 2019. Three years later, in 2022, he was awarded the prestigious Avery Fisher Career Grant, again the first saxophonist to be so honored.

Taimur Sullivan also notes that Steven now couples his performance prowess with "an amazing, incredible career as a composer," which he began as a graduate student at Northwestern, drawing inspiration from his other life experiences and interests, including the Black church and Rachmaninoff. Among his compositions is a work for renowned violinist Hilary Hahn, which she has been performing in concert halls around the world.

We leave you with this description of the remarkable Steven Banks as a bit of an appetizer and look forward to interviewing him for the main course, which will be served up at our June concert! 🎷



ESO's March 9th Young Persons' Concert

Side-by-side: 115 orchestra students from District 65 joined the ESO for the finale of our fun, free Young Persons' Concert in March. Many thanks to Charles Taylor who hosted the concert and Yancey Hughes for photos. 🎷



IMAGES COURTESY OF YANCEY HUGHES



EVANSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

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EVANSTON SYMPHONY HOLIDAY CONCERT

Sunday, December 15, 2024

PREFERRED SEATING AREA

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



EVANSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Lawrence Eckerling, Music Director

2024–2025 CONCERT SERIES

Soul & Inspiration

NOVEMBER 3, 2024

ENIGMA VARIATIONS

BEETHOVEN

Overture to King Stephen

MONTGOMERY

Soul Force

KORNGOLD

Violin Concerto

Maya Anjali Buchanan, *violin*

ELGAR

Variations on an Original Theme
("Enigma Variations")

FEBRUARY 2, 2025

SHOSTAKOVICH 5TH!

HOLLAND

Motor City Dance Mix

TCHAIKOVSKY

Variations on a Rococo Theme

Christine Lamprea, *cello*

SHOSTAKOVICH

Symphony No. 5 in D Minor

APRIL 6, 2025

BRAHMS' GERMAN REQUIEM

MOZART

Exsultate Jubilate

Josefien Stoppelenburg, *Soprano*

MOZART

"La ci darem la mano" from
Don Giovanni

Josefien Stoppelenburg, *Soprano*

Evan Bravos, *Bass-Baritone*

BRAHMS

German Requiem

North Shore Choral Society

Josefien Stoppelenburg, *Soprano*

Evan Bravos, *Bass-Baritone*

JUNE 8, 2025

THE AMERICAN- FRENCH CONNECTION

GERSHWIN

Cuban Overture

STILL

Mother and Child

(string orchestra version)

RAVEL

Piano Concerto in G Major

Ko-Eun Yi, *piano*

DEBUSSY

Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun

COPLAND

Billy the Kid Suite

Concert Venue

Subscription Series Concerts take place on Sundays at 2:30 p.m. in Pick-Staiger Concert Hall,
50 Arts Circle Dr., Evanston (just off of Sheridan Rd.).
Free, convenient parking. Box office opens at 1:30 p.m.

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