



KEYNOTES

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF
THE EVANSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

LAWRENCE ECKERLING, MUSIC DIRECTOR

Tchaikovsky & Mozart

The 2025–2026 season opens with a program that combines charm and passion. Local composer Stacy Garrop's *Song of Orpheus*, commissioned by the Louisiana Philharmonic in 2023, evokes the legendary Greek hero endowed with superhuman musical skills. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's Clarinet Concerto is one of the most charming wind concertos of all time. Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 6 "Pathétique" is his final masterpiece. The work is filled with passion, dreamlike ecstasy, triumph, and ultimately, despair.

Stacy Garrop (b. 1969) is a contemporary American composer whose music often tells stories drawn from myth, history, and lived experience. Based in Chicago, she has built a reputation for writing works that are both dramatically expressive and immediately accessible to audiences. The 7½-minute *Song of Orpheus* was commissioned by the Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra to open its 2023–24 season in their longtime home, the Beaux-Arts style Orpheum Theater. Garrop chose to center the work on Orpheus himself, the legendary musician of Greek mythology whose playing could move nature, charm animals, and even persuade stones to dance.

Of all the pieces Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791) wrote, his Clarinet Concerto is the only one of its kind and was written for his friend, Anton Stadler, who performed in many of Mozart's symphonies and operas. Unfortunately, no program of the premiere exists, but it was likely on October 16, 1791, when Stadler performed a concert in Prague. Initially composed for the basset clarinet (a clarinet with a lower register), the original score was lost after Stadler's death in 1812 when the basset clarinet fell out of use. During the 1960s, the reconstruction of the basset clarinet was led by English clarinetist Alan Hacker, with the close collaboration of renowned musicologists and instrument builders. Later

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 19

— 2:30 PM

**TCHAIKOVSKY
& MOZART**



versions of the concerto were adapted for the standard clarinet we know today.

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840–1893) was headed for a career as a civil servant, but when the opportunity to study music arose, he took full advantage and entered the Saint Petersburg Conservatory, graduating in 1865. His Symphony No. 6 "Pathétique" is his final completed symphony. The title of the piece was given by Tchaikovsky's brother and was originally intended to mean "passionate" rather than "pathetic," as it was mistranslated. The premiere took place in Saint Petersburg on October 28, 1893, conducted by Tchaikovsky himself just nine days before his death. In a letter to Grand Duke Konstantin Konstantinovich of Russia (who was a grandson of Emperor Nicholas), Tchaikovsky stated: "Without exaggeration, I have put my whole soul into this symphony, and I hope your highness will approve of it."

Join us October 19 to feel the charming and passionate power of music! 🎧



MUSICAL INSIGHTS

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 17, 2025

1:30 PM

FREE

**MEET ADRIAN MUNIVE,
ESO PRINCIPAL CLARINET**

**OPEN TO THE
PUBLIC**

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

SPONSORED BY

THE MERION

**Illinois
ARTS
Council**

This program is partially supported by a grant from the Illinois Arts Council through federal funds provided by the National Endowment for the Arts.



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 Michelle Pranger, General Manager, at (847) 864-8804. Write us at Evanston Symphony Orchestra, 1555 Sherman Avenue, Suite 318, Evanston, IL 60201. Email us at esomusic@evanstonsymphony.org. Visit our website evanstonsymphony.org.

BEHIND THE SCENES



IMAGE COURTESY OF MARC PERUSH PHOTOGRAPHY

Dear Subscribers and Supporters of the ESO,

We are about to begin our 2025–26 season, entitled “The Power of Music.” The word “power” here refers not only to how powerful and strong music can be sonically, but also refers to the way it has the power to transform us, inspire us and let us feel emotions deeply.

Our first concert of the season, on October 19, features Tchaikovsky’s 6th Symphony, entitled “Pathétique,” a piece the Evanston Symphony last performed 20 years ago. One of the privileges of again conducting major masterpieces like this work is observing how the orchestra has improved, evolved, and grown over long stretches of time. And I’m excited with anticipation to hear this piece unfold as we rehearse and perform this emotionally powerful work. Also on this first program is guest artist Stephen Williamson, principal clarinetist of the Chicago Symphony, playing Mozart’s astounding Clarinet Concerto. The ESO will also perform Stacy Garrop’s relatively new work “Song of Orpheus.” We can’t wait to perform these works for our audience!

On February 8, we have an all-German program featuring pianist Albert Cano Smit performing Beethoven’s 5th Piano Concerto, “Emperor.” This program also includes Robert Schumann’s 4th Symphony and Wagner’s “Prelude und Liebestod” from his opera *Tristan und Isolde*, which has some of the most passionate music ever composed.

Then on April 19, renowned pianist Jeffrey Biegel performs with us for the third time, playing Peter Boyer’s “Rhapsody in Red, White and Blue.” The Evanston Symphony is one of a consortium of 60 orchestras that helped bring this work to life. We will be performing the Illinois premiere of this fantastic, amazing work. Mr. Biegel will also be playing Gershwin’s ever-popular “Rhapsody in Blue” to close out this concert. Other works on the program will be Samuel Coleridge-Taylor’s “Petite Suite de Concert,” Bernstein’s suite from his score to the soundtrack of the film *On the Waterfront*, and Gershwin’s “Promenade” (“Walking The Dog”) written for the movie *Shall We Dance*.

And finally, on June 7, violin virtuoso Nathan Amaral will perform Glazunov’s beautiful and ultimately festive Violin Concerto. We will also perform Manuel de Falla’s second suite from his ballet *The Three-Cornered Hat*. To close out this concert season, we will play the fan favorite *Scheherazade* by Rimsky-Korsakov, an orchestra tour de force. In this work, representing Scheherazade is the solo violin, where Julie Fischer is celebrated for her tenth year as concertmaster with the ESO.

I know there are many ways for you to be influenced by “The Power of Music,” and we look forward to seeing you at all of our concerts! 🎻

—Lawrence Eckerling
Music Director, Evanston Symphony Orchestra

A New Season Starts!

Celebrating The Power of Music, our new season begins on October 19. We hope that you have subscribed already. Subscribers get the best prices and the best seats! If you would like to subscribe, please call

Michelle on 847-864-8804 or visit our website at www.evanstonsymphony.org. Please always call us for all orders with free children’s tickets and for special seating needs. See you very soon. 🎻



Musical Insights

A free pre-concert event at The Merion
Friday, October 17, 1:30 PM

Enhance your concert experience with a sneak preview. Composers come alive and their passions take center stage when Maestro Lawrence Eckerling takes you on an insider’s tour of the history and highlights behind the music. Adrian Munive, ESO Principal Clarinet, will also be featured. 🎻

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.

A Wonderful Legacy Gift

The ESO was honored to receive a generous legacy gift from the estate of Ruthanne DeWolfe. Ruthanne played cello with the orchestra for many years and, once she retired from the orchestra, continued to attend concerts regularly. These legacy gifts help the orchestra keep our ticket prices low and also help fund our outreach programs, such as *Music In Your World*, an educational program for 3–5-year-olds at District 65’s Head Start program. The ESO is very grateful for all support. You can find more details on how to support us on our website. 🎻

Stephen Williamson: Sublime Clarinet

The ESO is delighted to welcome Chicago Symphony Orchestra principal clarinet Stephen Williamson as soloist for Mozart's Clarinet Concerto on October 19. Mr. Williamson was appointed by Riccardo Muti in 2011, and was formerly principal clarinet of both the New York Philharmonic (2013–14) and the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra (2003–11). In addition, he has been a frequent guest principal clarinet in Japan with the Saito Kinen Festival Orchestra under the baton of Seiji Ozawa. Stephen Williamson is regarded as one of the greatest clarinetists in the world.

Mr. Williamson received his bachelor's degree and performer's certificate from the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, NY, and his master's degree from the Juilliard

School in New York. He continued his studies at the Berlin University of the Arts as a Fulbright Scholar, and is currently on the faculty of the Bienen School of Music at Northwestern. He lives in Wilmette with his wife, Jill; sons Ryan, Connor and Matthew; and dog Bucky and cat Ruby.

Look for an interview with Stephen Williamson soon on our website and at our concert! 🎧

—Kelly Brest van Kempen



Post-Concert Reception with Stephen Williamson and Stacy Garrop

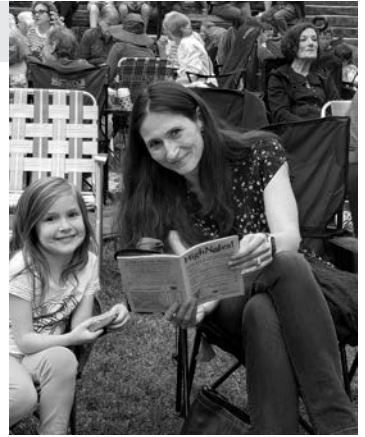


Please join us at a reception with renowned clarinetist, Stephen Williamson, and acclaimed composer, Stacy Garrop, immediately following the season opening concert on October 19. Meet

and talk with both these amazing musicians and enjoy light refreshments with ESO supporters and musicians. The reception will be in the lobby of Northwestern's Segal Visitors Center, located on the main floor of the parking garage for Pick-Staiger at 1841 Sheridan Rd. at 5:00 pm. Tickets are just \$25 and are limited—get yours today! 🎧

Summer Pops Concert

The weather cooperated and gave us a beautiful evening for our outdoor concert at Gillson Park in Wilmette. Maestro Eckerling led the orchestra in a fun-filled hour with highlights from *Wicked*, a Strauss waltz, two pieces from John Williams, and more. The audience packed the seats and brought their own chairs and picnics to the front grass. They joined in clapping along to Hot Soul Medley and the concert finale, Stars and Stripes Forever. A big thank you to concert master, Julie Fischer, for her delightful solo in the Theme from *Schindler's List*, Baker Demonstration School for their Instrument Petting Zoo, and, of course, our sponsor Optima Verdana. See you all next summer! 🎧



The Evanston Symphony Orchestra performs a free concert at Gillson Park, Wilmette



HOLIDAY CONCERT PHOTOS BY LAURA BENNETT

Evanston Children's Choir, accompanied by North Shore Choral Society and the ESO

The Evanston Symphony Orchestra Holiday Concert Sunday December 14, 3:00 pm at Evanston Township High School

This most wonderful afternoon of music brings you many of your holiday favorites in song, dance, and music. Our full orchestra will be joined by Evanston Dance Ensemble, Chicago Ballet Arts, Evanston Children's Choir, North Shore Choral Society, the Evanston Symphony Orchestra Gospel Choir, led by Kent Brooks, and, of course, Santa with his reindeer and elves.

Share this magical concert with friends and family. *Reserve your tickets early. This concert sells out!* Order your tickets by calling 847-864-8804 or online at our website. 🎶



A visit from the big man himself, Santa!



Chicago Ballet Arts dancing "The Bells of Christmas" accompanied by the ESO

A Very Special 'Special Concert'

Sunday December 14, 12:30–1:15 pm
Evanston Township High School Auditorium

Join the ESO for an inclusive celebration of holiday music where we welcome those with special needs. Our shortened holiday concert welcomes those who vocalize, move, and have diverse ways of experiencing music. We welcome you to a barrier-free concert of classical holiday music, song, and dance, where everyone can express their love of music authentically for a magical holiday experience.

More information about seat reservations will be released soon. Everyone will need a reservation prior to the concert.

This concert will have live music and dance, ASL interpretation, and a separate room with a calm space for retreat. Wheelchair spaces are limited and advanced ticketing is required. Free parking on Dodge Ave. Evanston Township High School is fully accessible. 🎶

Thank You to Two Special Players

The ESO would like to thank two players who retired from the orchestra this summer. Gloria Boyell played violin with us for 53 years; and John Russell played the timpani for 44 years. We now hope to see them in our audience at future concerts. 🎻



So Long, John Russell—and Thanks!

Retired ESO timpanist John F. Russell was born in Gloucester, England. His parents worked in a nursing home there until an American relative in Cicero offered his father work and housing. Britain was rebuilding after World War II, and good jobs were scarce, so the family packed up and came to the States when John was 4 years old.

John's first musical influences came from his mother's side of the family. His grandfather played harmonica and danced soft-shoe, and John had pleasant memories of winding up the old Victrola in the hallway to play 78s for him. He fondly remembers his mother singing to him and his brother at bedtime. She also sang with the Elgin Choral Union (now the Elgin Master Chorale since 2014) until new music reading requirements exceeded her skill; she learned everything by ear. John's father had played piano as a child but preferred art and eventually worked in the advertising department of the *Chicago Sun-Times*, among other jobs.

When John was eight, he attended a concert of a school orchestra in which his brother was a violinist. One piece on the program made John decide he wanted to play in an orchestra, but not because his brother played the violin. The piece was Leroy Anderson's *The Typewriter*, "a strong influence toward percussion!" John said, and imitated the delightful "Takatakata, sringggg, click, bing!" signature of the piece!

John started out on snare drum, but the glockenspiel fascinated him in grade school band. It stood all alone across the room, and no one ever played it. After gathering his courage, he boldly strode, hidden, behind the brass and sat down to play. Unfortunately, it was only then he realized he couldn't read the notes. As a drummer, he only read rhythms. This realization, however, motivated him to make a glockenspiel by drawing the bars on a shirt box, and he taught himself to read real music. Another fond memory of the glockenspiel was adapting the odd 5/4 meter second movement of Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 6 as a piece for the band marching in the Veterans Day parade. Unlike a Sousa march always beginning each measure with the left foot, every measure started on the "wrong" foot!

When John was 12, his family moved to Elgin, and he played percussion in the middle school band. There were two timpani but again no one played them, so he once again took over an orphaned instrument. Unlike the glockenspiel, there were only two notes to play, so that takeover was easy this time. Much later in life, he recalls a rehearsal of something loud and fast with the ESO—and losing control of his sticks. One flew into the middle of the orchestra, but no instrument was damaged, and luckily no horn player was harmed. (Sorry, Laura!).

The summer after graduation from high school, he studied piano, trumpet, and flute to prepare for entering Northwestern University as a music major. The highlight of that year was playing the Henry Cowell Percussion Concerto with eight timpani. However other interests prevailed, and he left Northwestern for a year to work as a psychiatric aide at Elgin State Hospital, a life changing experience, and he returned to NU to study psychology instead.

After college, John worked at a number of jobs, including 10 years as a computer programmer in the 1970s. Married in 1979 to Yvi, a native Italian speaker, and with a newborn son in 1988, it was time for a new career. Yvi was teaching Italian at home, and one of her students told her of a cataloging position at the Northwestern University Library. His ability to read in several European languages eventually led him to become Special Collections Cataloguer for the Library, where he worked with rare and unusual books ranging from illuminated works from before 1500 to manuscripts of Robert Burns.

John joined the ESO in 1981, two years before the retirement of legendary conductor Frank Miller, who was also principal cello of the Chicago Symphony. When asked about his favorite moments with the ESO, John said that there were many over his 44-year tenure, but most memorable was a performance of Rachmaninoff's *Symphonic Dances* from the ESO's concert on February 11, 2024. "The music was difficult, but the Orchestra responded with great ensemble, intonation and enthusiasm," he said. "The percussion section did especially well with the difficult rhythms."

He recalls that among the most challenging performances of the ESO was Beethoven's 9th, where the timpani are required to play very fast notes in strict rhythm with the strings. "The temptation is to blur the part for convenience sake, but Beethoven clearly wants to hear every note in order to reinforce the violins. And in the second movement you actually play the tune!" A different challenge was Ennio Morricone's theme from the film *Cinema Paradiso*, which the ESO played in its April 7, 2024, concert. "The timpani don't often get the tune, but here they play the same line as the basses, and not just two notes!"

John has stepped down from his longtime position as ESO timpanist because of health problems that began after Covid. Nevertheless, he continues to pursue what music he can produce from the organ, the violin, and the recorder. He also writes and maintains a webpage devoted to Robert Louis Stevenson, but here the focus is not on that Scotsman's classic adventure books, but rather on his little-known musical compositions.

Enjoy your retirement, John, and thank you for your many years as the ESO's outstanding timpanist! 🎻

—Kelly Brest van Kempen