



## Historic Baton Presented to ESO Music Director Eckerling



By David Ellis Sunday at 7:42 p.m.



Lawrence Eckerling with Shirley Miller and the Toscanini/Frank Miller Baton

### Historic Baton Presented to Conductor of Evanston Symphony Orchestra

Evanston, IL (March 11, 2012) — An historic baton used by legendary conductor Arturo Toscanini was presented to Evanston Symphony Orchestra Music Director Lawrence Eckerling at the orchestra's concert today in Pick-Staiger Concert Hall in Evanston.

Making the presentation was Shirley J. Miller, wife of the late Frank Miller, who was the former conductor and music director of the Evanston Symphony. Miller, who died in 1986, would have been 100 years old on March 5, 2012. Mrs. Miller chose to present the baton to Maestro Eckerling in recognition of the performance quality that he has brought to the Evanston Symphony Orchestra since taking over as Music Director in 2003.

Miller, a cellist, had an illustrious musical career. From 1940 to 1954, he was principal cellist for Toscanini's NBC Symphony Orchestra. When ill health forced Toscanini to retire in 1954, the NBC Orchestra ceased to exist. The famous maestro gave Miller several batons, which were created for Toscanini by his neurosurgeon. Toscanini also wrote only one letter of recommendation during his entire career; it was in support of Frank Miller's candidacy for conductor of the Florida Symphony Orchestra.

Miller was principal cellist for the Chicago Symphony Orchestra from 1958 to 1985. While with the Chicago Symphony, he was appointed music director of the Evanston Symphony Orchestra in 1962, a post he held until 1984. During Miller's tenure, the ESO was considered one of the best community orchestras in the country.

Founded in 1945, the Evanston Symphony Orchestra offers five concerts a year with a mission to provide community members of all ages with convenient, affordable opportunities to perform and hear fine classical music from locally, nationally and internationally renowned artists. The ESO was the Illinois Council of Orchestras' "Orchestra of the Year" for 2010.