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Orchestra evokes the English countryside

BY DOROTHY ANDRIES | Contributor May 3, 2013 10:48AM

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Cellist Wendy Warner

Updated: May 3, 2013 10:52AM

It finally feels like spring, so it won't be hard to imagine being in England's green and pleasant land Sunday when the Evanston Symphony Orchestra presents "Music from the English Countryside."

Cellist Wendy Warner will play Edgar Elgar's glorious Cello Concerto, a work closely association with the late cellist Jacqueline du Pre. "I grew up listening to her recording," Warner said, when reached at her home in Columbus, Ga. where she teaches at the Schwob School of Music at Columbus State University.

Warner is a Midwestern girl who began studying the cello at age 6 with Nell Novak at the Music Institute of Chicago in Winnetka. Later she went to the Curtis Institute of Music as a student of Mstislav Rostropovich, the great Russian cellist, and after graduation debuted with him and his National Symphony Orchestra in Washington, D. C.

One of her latest endeavors has been the International Beethoven Project with pianist George Lepauw and violinist Sang Mee Lee, which gave the world premiere in 2009 in Chicago of an unknown Beethoven trio discovered by Lepauw.

Warner also made a Cedille recording, titled "Double Play: Twentieth Century Duos for Violin and Cello," with her childhood friend violinist Rachel Barton Pine. "Rachel lives in Chicago and I live in Georgia, so right now we talk more than we play together," Warner acknowledged. "But I will always keep up my Midwestern connections."

The Evanston Symphony Orchestra concert will open with a

'Music from the English Countryside'

Evanston Symphony Orchestra

2:30 p.m. Sunday, May 5

Northwestern University's Pick-Staiger Concert Hall, 50 Arts Circle Drive, Evanston

Tickets \$35; \$30 seniors; free children 12 and younger

younger

(847) 864-8804; www.evanstonsymphony.org.

The Evanston Symphony Orchestra concert will open with a salute to the centennial of the birth of Benjamin Britten, one of the finest English composers of the 20th century. He wrote 14 operas, numerous concertos, choral pieces, symphonies, songs and film scores. The orchestra is playing one of his most famous orchestral pieces — “Four Sea Interludes” from his 1945 opera “Peter Grimes.”

The opera tells the grim story of an English fisherman implicated in the murder of two apprentices on the ship. “There is a darkness in these Interludes,” said Lawrence Eckerling, music director and conductor of the Evanston Symphony Orchestra. The lush harmonies are seductive, he continued. “It is easy for the musicians to get wrapped up in the notes. We want to go a step beyond the notes and project the thoughts of Peter Grimes.”

The orchestra also will play Symphony No. 5 in D Major by Vaughan Williams, which Eckerling believes epitomizes the spiritual qualities of the English pastoral tradition. “This symphony is tonal and easy to listen to,” he explained, “ethereal and open. It is a true masterpiece and played a lot in England.”