



Evanston Symphony releases first commercial album

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To commemorate its 65th season, the Evanston Symphony Orchestra released its first commercial album this weekend.

"Evanston Symphony Live!" was recorded entirely in Northwestern's Pick-Staiger Concert Hall, 50 Arts Circle Drive, where the orchestra has performed four times a year since 2006.

The CD features 11 songs composed by Leonard Bernstein, Evanston resident and ESO bassoonist Donald Draganski, George Gershwin, NU alum Howard Hanson and Gwyneth Walker. The disc also includes two world premiere recordings never released on CD before.

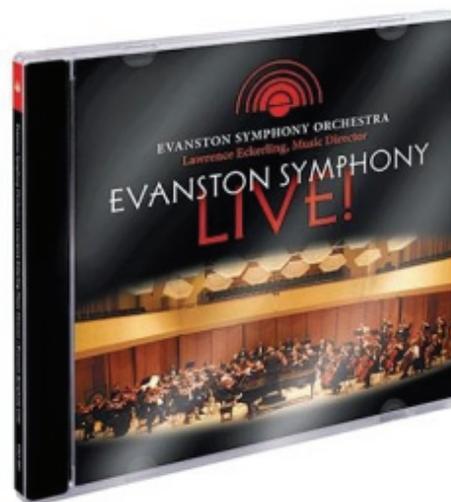
"On a classical CD, the pieces are much longer. This CD tries to come where the songs have some relation to each other," ESO general manager David Ellis said. "All the songs are from the 20th and 21st centuries, so they're fairly modern for classical music."

He added the album was financed entirely by the orchestra without any fundraising efforts.

Still, Ellis emphasized the performers' passion rather than monetary gain.

"It is a community orchestra where the players are volunteers. They play out of love of music," Ellis said. "We're trying to cover our costs, but we're not trying to make a huge profit."

The CD features performances never released to the public, as previous recordings



Courtesy of Evanston Symphony

were solely intended for educational purposes.

Ellis touted the campus venue as an ideal recording location.

"We think it is an excellent concert hall, and the acoustics are great," Ellis said.

Lawrence Eckerling, who also performs the piano solo for Gershwin's "Rhapsody in Blue," conducted the entire debut CD. The orchestra hired Pick-Staiger technical manager Herb Simrall to record all the tracks for the CD, and Studiomedia was responsible for mixing the songs.

"I just thought this would be a good thing to do, and I enjoy recording," Simrall said. "It's filled with great artists. It'll be a great CD."

Ellis reiterated the album's main purpose is to showcase the decades-old orchestra's talents for both new and seasoned listeners.

"We just wanted to show how great the orchestra is," Ellis said. "It will give people a sense of how well this orchestra of music lovers and volunteers are actually able to play."

"Evanston Symphony Live!" can be purchased at evanstonsymphony.org/cd for \$17.

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