



# KEYNOTES

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF  
THE EVANSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

LAWRENCE ECKERLING, MUSIC DIRECTOR

## Russian: Mussorgsky, Khachaturian, Shostakovich

Masterpieces by three of Russia's greatest composers and a rising star violinist highlight the second concert of the Evanston Symphony Orchestra's 66th season. Please see inside for an interview with Bella Hristova, our soloist in the Khachaturian Violin Concerto.

Modest Mussorgsky (1839–1881) created some of the most original monuments of Russian music, including the opera *Boris Godunov*, the piano cycle *Pictures at an Exhibition*, and the symphonic poem *Night on Bald Mountain*, which will open our concert. Many of his compositions were rearranged or reorchestrated after his early death as they were deemed incomprehensible by conservatory trained musicians. Mussorgsky prepared three different versions of *Night* between 1867 and 1880, but the standard concert version is that of 1886 by Nicolai Rimsky-Korsakov. The music depicts a "black mass" or "Witches' Sabbath" which is ended by the coming of the dawn and the chiming of a church bell. Walt Disney understood the cinematic power of this battle between darkness and light and used it as the finale of his 1940 film *Fantasia*, in yet another arrangement, that by the conductor Leopold Stokowski.

Frequently referred to as an Armenian composer, Aram Khachaturian (1903–1978) in fact was born in Georgia and spent most of his life in Moscow. Nevertheless, his Armenian heritage suffuses much of his music, particularly the ballets *Gayaneh* and *Spartacus*. His Violin Concerto incorporates these colorful folk elements into the standard three movement concerto form. See inside for Maestro Eckerling's "Behind the Scenes" column, which explains how this neglected masterwork came to be programmed for this concert.

Arguably the greatest Russian composer of the twentieth century, Dmitri Shostakovich (1906–1975) was almost an exact contemporary of Khachaturian. Shostakovich was



one of the great early bloomers in music history, and his First Symphony, written as a graduation exercise from the Leningrad Conservatory, brought him worldwide musical fame at the age of 19. Compare this age to that of the composers at the premieres of their first symphonies: Beethoven age 30, Brahms age 43, Mahler age 29, Prokofiev age 26, Schumann age 31, Sibelius age 34.

Shostakovich's father died in 1922, and the teen-aged Dmitri was forced to help support his mother by improvising the piano accompaniment to silent films. This experience carried over into the sardonic and sometimes cartoonish character of the first two movements of the First Symphony. The final two movements evoke the more traditional Romantic sound world of Tchaikovsky and Mahler, and bring the symphony and our concert to a richly satisfying close. 🎻

—David Ellis



BELLA HRISTOVA,  
VIOLIN



MUSICAL INSIGHTS

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 2012  
1:30 PM

MEET BELLA HRISTOVA

3200 GRANT STREET, EVANSTON

⊕ Presbyterian Homes

THE EVANSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA IS AN ILLINOIS NOT-FOR-PROFIT COMMUNITY ORCHESTRA PROVIDING DIVERSE, ENJOYABLE AND ACCESSIBLE MUSICAL ENTERTAINMENT THAT ENRICHES THE ORCHESTRA, THE AUDIENCE AND THE COMMUNITY.

## BEHIND THE SCENES



LAWRENCE ECKERLING,  
MUSIC DIRECTOR

One of the goals in programming for the Evanston Symphony Orchestra is to offer a combination of familiar music alongside excellent, but lesser known, works. When programming this season I was surprised to learn that a number of musicians in the ESO were not at all familiar with the Khachaturian Violin Concerto. I became aware of this work perhaps twenty years ago when some of my violinist friends introduced me to what I now consider a great work.

I decided to do some unofficial research. The League of American Orchestras in 2005 did a survey of 103 orchestras in the United States and gathered data about the frequency of performances of all works performed. During the 2004/05 season, there were 22 performances of the Brahms concerto. 17 Tchaikovsky's, 19 Mendelssohn's, 14 Beethoven's. There were 6 Bartok's and 6 Korngold's. And the Khachaturian? It was performed only twice that season!

I also learned by reading blogs of violinists and violin teachers that there seems to be a bias towards Brahms, Tchaikovsky, Mendelssohn and Beethoven. While I won't dispute how great those works are, I can't help believing that the popularity of concertos has much to do with the number of recordings that have been made with superstar artists, and how those artists "champion" these works by performing them. The Khachaturian concerto was written in 1940 for superstar violinist David Oistrakh, and he indeed performed it often, and recorded it. Although it seems to have lost some steam over the years, recently it has been recorded by several young violinists. I believe that as rising artists such as the ESO's guest soloist Bella Hristova perform this work, it is destined once again to be an audience favorite, and so we are delighted to be presenting it to you! 🎻

—Lawrence Eckerling  
Music Director, Evanston Symphony Orchestra

### 3 CROWNS LAUNCH PARTY!

A big thank you to Three Crowns Park who hosted the party to launch our first CD. Our CD features the world premiere of Gwyneth Walker's *The Promised Land*, and also Lawrence Eckerling performing George Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* with the Evanston Symphony. CDs are available online for \$17. 🎻



### AN EVANSTON SYMPHONY CHRISTMAS MARKS THE FESTIVE SEASON

A huge audience turned up to hear this joyous festive concert, making it our highest attended Christmas concert ever. There were also a record number of performers on stage: 90 musicians from the Evanston Symphony Orchestra, the 140 voices member North Shore Choral Society, 30 voices from the Evanston Children's Choir, and 45 dancers from the Evanston Dance Ensemble. Both choirs sang the *Magnificat* of Mark Gresham with the orchestra.

One of the audience's favorite pieces from the afternoon was the *Swing Carol Fantasy*, a big band interpretation of the most popular carols, arranged by Jim Stephenson. As always, concertgoers were treated during intermission to holiday carols sung by the ETHS a capella choir under the direction of Mary Theresa Reed. And, of course, Santa and his elves came at the end to celebrate the season. Thank you to Wally Bobkiewicz, Evanston's City Manager, for donning the Santa suit, and to Christopher Duquet for donating a most popular raffle prize of \$1,000 gift certificate.

This year this concert was made possible by some super Secret Santa donors, matched by a generous ESO member. This concert raises money for our program Music in Your World (see related article). Thank you Secret Santa donors! 🎻



EVANSTON DANCE ENSEMBLE DANCES TO TCHAIKOVSKY'S  
NUTCRACKER SUITE WITH THE EVANSTON SYMPHONY  
ORCHESTRA

PHOTOMATT GLAVIN

# FORMER ESO MUSICIAN SPREADS HOLIDAY CHEER

After reading the wonderful article about “An Evanston Symphony Christmas” in the *Evanston Roundtable*, harpist Elizabeth Cifani was motivated to make a continuing gift to the ESO to underwrite our harp expenses. Ms. Cifani played with the ESO while majoring in music at Northwestern University. She has recently retired as principal harpist with the Lyric Opera of Chicago but continues to be active as a soloist, chamber and recording musician, and as a teacher at Northwestern. Many of her students have also played with the ESO. “It’s time to give back,” Ms. Cifani said. 🎵



## MEET BELLA HRISTOVA!



BELLA HRISTOVA,  
VIOLIN

Bella Hristova has always been surrounded by music – even from before she was born. Her mother, a pianist and choir director, played music during her pregnancy to have a positive influence on her child. Bella’s father, a composer of music primarily for films and children’s choirs, no doubt approved, and the ploy obviously worked. Sadly, her father died when Bella was just 4, but she remembers listening to records of his music and dancing around their apartment, especially to his *Concerto for Violin and String Orchestra*. (There are only two copies of this work in the U.S., and one of them is at Northwestern. Bella hopes to see the work while she is in Evanston.)

Bella started violin at 6. She wanted to play the piano, but her mother persuaded her that the violin would be a better choice. A few years after Bella began violin lessons, her mother took her to a concert in the great concert hall in Sofia to hear the famous Bulgarian violinist Mila Georgieva, an experience that impressed the young Bella very much. She was also awed by a live concert on television; the violinist, Vanya Milanova, soon became her new teacher.

It was obvious that Bella had talent. When she was 12, she took part in a competition in the Czech Republic. She placed second – she won it the following year – and caught the eye (and ear) of an American, who offered her the opportunity to study in the United States. A program in Michigan seemed to have the best combination of music and schooling. So, at age 13, Bella went to Ann Arbor, where she lived with a host family, was enrolled at the Steiner School, a private school based on the Waldorf curriculum, and studied with Professor Ida Kavafian, who gave master classes at the University of Michigan.

Bella doesn’t remember any particular moment when she decided that music was to be her career. Rather, she says, one opportunity came after another, and that was it. Prior to coming to the U.S., she had participated in master classes with Ruggiero Ricci at the Mozarteum in Salzburg. Then she studied with Kavafian, who also taught at the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia, which made Curtis a logical choice for Bella after she graduated from the Steiner School. An Artist Diploma with Jaime Laredo at Indiana completed her formal credentials.

Many musicians have regimens to stay in shape and routines that they perform prior to a concert, but Bella says that she hates exercise and gets really bored running or going to the gym. However, about six months ago she discovered bikram yoga, which is done in a very hot environment, and says she finds it trains her mind and helps her deal with stress. On concert day, just prior to a performance, she spends about an hour mechanically, and very slowly, going through the piece just concentrating on the notes, without any expression. This helps make sure that the notes are firmly in her mind so that she can focus on the expression while on stage.

Many classical musicians play jazz, rock, folk, heavy metal or other types music for fun and as a contrast to their professional lives, but Bella finds that she doesn’t have time to venture out of the classical world at the moment. However, she loves to knit and will work on a project when she takes a break from practicing. When we spoke she was working on a pair of cable-knit socks – another reason we stand in awe of this talented young woman!

Bella fell in love with Philadelphia when at Curtis and still calls the city home, preferring it to New York. “Philadelphia is a very walkable city,” she says, “not like New York, which is a very stressful place because there’s so much schlepping! Cabs are hopeless and there’s too much traffic.” She even prefers the Philadelphia airport over all of the choices in New York; it’s close to the city and the airspace is not as busy, which means fewer delays. (Ben Franklin would have adopted this lovely Bulgarian import in a Philadelphia minute!)

Despite her preference for Philadelphia, Bella went to New York in mid-December for the annual 10-day New York String Orchestra Seminar, which culminates in two concerts, one a sold-out event on Christmas Eve under the baton of Jaime Laredo in Carnegie Hall. Bella was the featured soloist this past year, performing Bach’s *Concerto for Two Violins and Orchestra* in D minor with Maestro Laredo. In his December 26 review for the *New York Times*, music critic Allan Kozinn wrote:

“Both Mr. Laredo and Ms. Hristova played with a supple, rounded tone, and often their sound and phrasing were so closely matched that when Bach shifted the focus from one violin to the other, the transitions were seamless...”

“Ms. Hristova had the spotlight to herself in Dvořák’s lush, sweetly melodic *Romance* in F (Op. 11) and Saint-Saëns’s unabashedly showy *Introduction and Rondo Capriccioso* (Op. 28), and she acquitted herself beautifully... [with] a lovely, often soaring tone.”

The ESO is delighted to welcome this extraordinarily talented young artist to our stage. 🎵

—Kelly Brest van Kempen

# THE ESO BRINGS HIGH QUALITY MUSIC EDUCATION TO PRE-SCHOOLERS

Every year, there is new evidence that music training enhances both intelligence and the ability to learn in young minds. So every year, the Evanston Symphony Orchestra is delighted to bring a proven music education program, Music in Your World, to more pre-schoolers in Evanston. This year we are reaching 500 impressionable young children at Head Start, Pre-K for All, Pre-K at Risk and the McGaw YMCA Children's Center.



Let by Northwestern doctoral student Charles Taylor, we introduce music, dance, music concepts and musical instruments to under-served three to five year olds, who actively participate in these classes. Music in Your World is made possible by grants from the Evanston Community Foundation and the Kiwanis Club of Evanston.

Sonia Coster, Executive Director of the McGaw YMCA Children's Center is very happy that the ESO now brings this program to her students. After our first session with the students this fall, Ms Coster said "I was so very impressed. Mr. Taylor is great." The children were too busy singing and dancing to add any comments!

We encourage families to attend all our concerts so we provide special program booklets for children, titled *KidNotes*, at every concert at Pick-Staiger Hall. These booklets introduce the music and explain some important musical concepts while entertaining the kids with pencil and paper games as well. (And these booklets are so good that sometimes adults have been known to ask for their own copy at our concerts!)

Maestro Eckerling sums up the importance of these programs this way: 'Our children need to learn how to feel things deeply, how to give and how to love. No other discipline can teach this like music can, and with a lifelong impact.'



## RAFFLE WINNER!

Christopher Duquet, graduate gemologist and goldsmith, donated a \$1000 gift certificate to the Evanston Symphony Orchestra which was the highly desired prize for a raffle at the ESO's recent holiday concert, *An Evanston Symphony Christmas*. After spirited buying of raffle tickets, Santa drew the winning number.



Pictured, right, is the lucky winner, Mary Cohen, with Christopher Duquet as they view a piece of jewelry. Christopher Duquet Fine Jewelry is located at 1234 Chicago Avenue in Evanston.

# CELEBRATE OUR 66<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY SEASON— WITH YOUR GIFT TO THE ESO'S 2012 ANNUAL FUND!

You share the excitement of a live symphonic performance each time Maestro Eckerling and the orchestra take the stage. For 66 years, supporters like you have helped bring music into our community.

The ESO keeps ticket prices low because we're committed to keeping live concerts accessible to everyone. We earn only about half our operating budget from ticket sales. The other half comes from contributions—from generous music lovers like you. Your gifts also support the ESO's music education programs *Music In Your World* and *Play Me A Picture, Paint Me A Tune!*, in partnership with School District 65, that strengthen educational outcomes and enrich the lives of our children.

We value every gift given and all ESO donors are featured proudly in our concert programs. In addition, leadership donors of \$125 or more are featured on our special **Share the Stage**—each chooses a favorite instrument to sponsor! Gifts of \$125–\$349 are *Section Members* and gifts of \$350 or more are *Principal Players*. Of course, every gift, whatever its size, inspires others to give and ensures the ESO remains a strong and vital part of our community.

Make your tax-deductible gift today! Please look for the **ESO Share The Stage** in the Pick-Staiger lobby at our February 5 concert. You can make your donation at intermission—and choose the instrument you wish to sponsor. Watch your mailbox for more information on **Share The Stage**...and thank you for your support!

### DONATION LEVELS

<input type="checkbox"/> Concertmaster*	\$1,000 and up	<input type="checkbox"/> Section Member*	\$125 – \$349
<input type="checkbox"/> Soloist*	\$600 – \$999	<input type="checkbox"/> Patron	\$75 – \$124
<input type="checkbox"/> Principal Player*	\$350 – \$599	<input type="checkbox"/> Supporter	\$10 – \$74

### DONATION

I would like to make a gift for the following amount: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

\* Instrument choice \_\_\_\_\_

Share The Stage donor listing should read: \_\_\_\_\_

### GIFT RECOGNITION OR TRIBUTE GIFT INFORMATION (optional)

Tribute gift:  in honor  in memory \_\_\_\_\_

Name and address to notify \_\_\_\_\_

### DONOR

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY/STATE/ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_

EMAIL \_\_\_\_\_

### PAYMENT INFORMATION

Check Enclosed  Visa  MasterCard  Discover

Card Acct# \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name as it appears on card \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Mail this filled-out form with check or credit card number to:

Evanston Symphony Orchestra • PO Box 778, Evanston, IL 60204