



KEYNOTES

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF
THE EVANSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

LAWRENCE ECKERLING, MUSIC DIRECTOR

The Virtuoso Piano

The ESO's 73rd season is titled "Virtuosos" in recognition of the diversity of local performers represented in our subscription series. This second program is the most traditional one of the four concerts and illustrates the closeness of our three composers: Mendelssohn, Schumann and Brahms.


Felix Mendelssohn (1809–1847) was born in Hamburg, Germany but is most closely associated with Leipzig, Germany, where he was the conductor of one of the most prestigious of all orchestras, the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra. In 1839 the Leipzig Theatrical Pension Fund decided to mount a production of a recent play by Victor Hugo titled *Ruy Blas*. They asked Mendelssohn for an overture and a choral song; he gave them the song but declined to compose the overture as he found the play "ghastly." However, since he thought highly of the charity he eventually provided the overture, which he composed in just three days — to prove that he could do it! The result is one of Mendelssohn's most exciting compositions.

The Piano Concerto in A Minor by Robert Schumann (1810–1856) is held by many to be his most perfect work for orchestra, primarily because the inclusion of the solo piano counterbalances his natural tendency for less than ideal orchestration. The work was first performed (first movement only) under the title Concert Fantasy for Piano and Orchestra in 1841, with Mendelssohn conducting the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra and with Schumann's wife Clara as piano soloist (8½ months pregnant). Clara performed the premiere of the complete concerto in 1845, also with the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra. This work (three movements taking 32 minutes) is a cornerstone of the concert repertoire. Johannes Brahms (1833–1897) was born in Hamburg and moved to Dusseldorf 1853 in order to meet Schumann. Schumann reciprocated by praising Brahms as the future of German music. Schumann died of mental illness in 1856

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THE VIRTUOSO PIANO

and Brahms spent the rest of his life in love with Clara Schumann, although there is no evidence that they consummated their relationship.

Brahms spent many years agonizing over a first symphony, primarily due to his anxiety over matching those by THE German symphonist, Ludwig van Beethoven. In fact, the period between 1850 (Schumann's Third Symphony) and the 1876 premiere of Brahms' First Symphony did not produce any German symphonies which are part of today's standard concert repertory. Brahms came to grips with the Beethoven influence by adopting the overall outline of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, the strategy of "from darkness to light," which is manifested in the key scheme of C Minor in the first movement leading to a triumphant C Major in the finale. But the best known theme of the symphony, the flowing lyrical melody on the strings in the 4th movement is clearly derived from the "Ode to Joy" theme of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. So Brahms delivered a double tribute to Beethoven in this splendid symphony. 

—David Ellis



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**FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 2019
1:30 PM**

MEET ADAM NEIMAN

1611 CHICAGO AVE., EVANSTON

 **THE MERION**



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. For more information on ESO concerts and events, please contact David Ellis, General Manager, at (847) 864-8804. Write us at Evanston Symphony Orchestra, PO Box 778, Evanston, IL 60204. Email us at esomusic@evanstonstosymphony.org. Visit our website evanstonstosymphony.org.

BEHIND THE SCENES



The Score and Its Tempo

When coming up with a topic for these articles in Keynotes, I try and think of a subject to illuminate for the reader about the upcoming concert. Usually I try and come up with topics which will easily be understood by

non-musicians. But in the case of our upcoming February concert, what does one say when writing about the music of Mendelssohn, Schumann and Brahms? Especially about information that isn't likely to be covered in traditional program notes?

Well, there IS a topic, but it's not so easy for non-musicians to understand. But I'm going to try anyway. I have touched on this topic before in these columns, but it is worth revisiting because it is so applicable to the three pieces on our upcoming concert. This subject concerns what is printed in the score pertaining to tempo (how fast and/or how slow the music goes), and the information that composers actually give performers.

First, as examples let's talk about two extremes of music that is not on our program. In the music of J.S. Bach (as well as that of most of his contemporaries), there is hardly any information given by the composer about the tempo. In his Brandenburg Concerti, he might say Allegro (fast) or Adagio (slow). But HOW fast? Or HOW slow? And in other pieces, Bach provides absolutely no information at all (other than what notes to play). There are no metronome markings, as it had not yet been invented during Bach's lifetime!

An example of the other extreme would be a modern composition such as Jim Stephenson's *Liquid Melancholy*, that was performed on our opening concert. In it, the composer gives an enormous amount of information about tempo, including metronome markings. Perfect, right? (Not so fast!

In our performance, WITH the soloist who it was written for, there were times that our tempo deviated from the marking written in the score!)

So now to Mendelssohn, Schumann and Brahms. There is not a metronome marking in ANY of the three scores! There are indeed tempo indications, or character indications. Sometimes it's hard to decide if the composer meant their indications as a tempo indication, or as a "character" indication. Allegro (fast) is obviously a tempo. But, again, HOW fast. Mendelssohn writes "Allegro molto" (VERY fast.) Brahms writes for his third movement "Un poco Allegretto e grazioso," which translated is "A little fast, and graceful." Graceful is not a speed; it's a character. And Schumann...to understand Schumann's orchestral music, you have to understand his piano music first. And you have to understand that there is great flexibility for tempo built into his music. It's part of Schumann's musical DNA. You must perform his orchestral music with his solo piano music in mind.

So the question then is, did these composers leave any real information about tempo and speed? Of course they did. Whether it's the music of Bach, Stephenson, Brahms, Schumann, Mendelssohn, or any other good composer, they ALL give us information about tempo. But it is in the notes themselves. It's in the pace of the changing harmonies. It's in the rhythms (sometimes melody parts, but often in the parts of the accompaniment). And even for composers who gave metronome markings, they are not the "last word." The last word is found inside those notes, rhythms and harmonies. It is those very notes, rhythms and harmonies that dictate tempi (and also character) in any good piece of music. And the art of using ALL of the given information...ALL of it...and turning that into something that audiences will listen to in a meaningful way, that is the real definition of interpretation in music. 🎧

—Lawrence Eckerling

Music Director, Evanston Symphony Orchestra

Musical Insights — The WIN-WIN becomes a Trifecta!

Whether you attend Musical Insights to get a glimpse of the concert to come, or to enjoy the perspective of gifted musicians (even though you may be unable to attend the full performance two days later) you are the lucky winner of a great mid-day interlude! ESO Maestro Lawrence Eckerling shares his fantastic gifts as conductor and interpreter of musical masterworks, discussing the various themes and structure of the selection, and highlights of different movements. He demonstrates many of his points using his terrific talent as a pianist.

ESO General Manager David Ellis shares the depth and breadth of his vast knowledge of musical history and historic performances, providing social context, composer background, composition insights, then illustrating all this with brief clips of outstanding performances of the featured opus. Our featured soloist, Adam Neiman, will provide a preview of Schumann's Piano Concerto, and will also play a solo

work exclusively for the Musical Insights audience. He is keeping the piece a surprise until then! It's a chance to see and hear the soloist in a more intimate setting, reminiscent of a salon performance. A brief Q & A allows the Musical Insights audience to engage in the discussion; light refreshments after the presentation provide the opportunity to continue the conversation one-on-one with these very knowledgeable and talented musical inspirations!

Truly a WIN-WIN — It all adds up to an interesting and enjoyable way to enhance your appreciation of the concert to come, or an informative presentation and demonstration of some of the great masterpieces of the symphonic library. **Friday, February 1st at 1:30 pm in the Crystal Ballroom at The Merion (1611 Chicago Avenue)** offers you the chance to be a part the next WIN-WIN Musical Insights! 🎧

Meet Adam Neiman



With a mother who spent her career as a concert pianist, a father who is an avid opera lover, and an older brother who played both piano and violin, it is no surprise that Adam Neiman became a concert pianist. Adam grew up in Fremont, California, near San

Francisco and notes that, in a house with three pianos, “music was like air breathed every day.” He began piano lessons at five and by eight was making 30 to 40 appearances a year playing in recitals and with orchestras. At 11, he made his debut at UCLA’s Royce Hall, about which *Clavier Magazine* said, “Adam Neiman gave a performance that rivaled those of many artists on the concert stage today... his playing left listeners shaking their heads in disbelief.”

Adam credits his early teachers, Trula Whelan, Hans Boepple and Fanny Waterman, with preparing him well for his career. At 14, he debuted in Germany at the Ivo Pogorelich Festival and, at 15, won second prize at the Casagrande International Piano Competition in Italy, the youngest medalist in the competition’s history. Entering Juilliard at 16, he studied primarily with Herbert Stessin, who helped him refine his skills and his interpretation of music. In 1995, he became the youngest-ever winner of the Gilmore Young Artist Award, and, the following year, won the Young Concert Artists International Auditions. Two-time winner of Juilliard’s Gina Bachauer International Piano Competition, he received the Rubinstein Award upon his graduation in 1999, the same year in which he received the Avery Fisher Career Grant. Since then, Adam has established a distinguished international career as an acclaimed soloist and recitalist, which you can read more about at www.adamneiman.com.

When asked to describe something funny that has happened to him during his career, Adam responded with a tale that will resonate with international travelers, regardless of destination! In this case, Adam got a taste of Italian *dolce far niente*. At 16, he was invited to perform at a music festival in Amalfi. The logistics of the trip fell to his mother and took months to arrange — flights, transportation, hotels, as well as their planned arrival several days beforehand to settle in, conquer jet lag, and let Adam practice on the performance piano. When they landed in Naples, however, there was no one at the airport to meet them and no one answered the phone at the festival office. Finally they decided to take a cab to Amalfi, a 45-mile trip their driver made in record time barreling along the narrow cliff roads while belting out Neapolitan songs at full blast.

They arrived, gratefully alive, at the festival office only to find it closed and no hours posted. *Allora*, off to their hotel — which had never heard of them, had no reservation in their name, and was, *scuse, signora*, completely booked. They found another hotel, but the festival office was still closed the next day. They then went to inspect the recital venue,

which was in a cloister; unfortunately, the piano was locked and no one seemed to have a key. Adam says they spent the next four days lounging on the beach and eating seafood!

The morning of the recital found both the festival office and the piano still locked. Adam and his mother came back just before performance time to discover the gates open and thousands of people streaming in to hear Adam play. Then the woman in charge of the festival materialized and greeted them with a cheery “*Benevenuti!* I’ve been on vacation...!” She also had the key to the piano. So, after a week of not touching a keyboard, Adam sat down at a piano he had never played and began his recital. The program included Chopin’s Piano Sonata No. 2 in B-flat minor, with the famous funeral march in the third movement. And of course, as Adam was playing this powerful movement, the large bell of the cloister started to toll. After five days of the delightful vagaries of *la vita italiana*, Adam merely gave a mental shrug and adjusted his time to the tolling of the bell...

In 2015, Adam accepted a full-time teaching position at Roosevelt University. He describes Chicago as “wonderful,” adding that he loves the energy of the Loop, the distinctive personalities of the neighborhoods, even the uncertainties of the weather. Adam’s wife, Ariella Mak-Neiman, is a doctoral student in piano performance at UC Santa Barbara and has finished the residency portion of her program. A Wisconsin native, she’s had to do little to adjust to life in the Windy City and can focus her energies on finishing her dissertation.

Adam is also a fan of Chicago’s great food. His favorite is Korean, which he says he could eat “3 X 365. It’s *so* good — the sourness of the kimchee, the flavors of the grilled meat. It’s all wholesome, healthy and flavorful.” When he has time, he enjoys playing tennis and is an avid reader of works about the medieval to Renaissance periods of British history as well as rousing fantasies from Tolkien to Asimov to Rowling.

Adam describes the Schumann’s *Piano Concerto in A Minor* as “so beautiful,” but notes that, as in other of his works, “it reflects Schumann’s own multiple personality disorder.” Schumann suffered from a dysfunction that would most likely be diagnosed and treated today as bipolar disorder. While his first serious episode did not manifest itself until 1833, it was perhaps foreshadowed in a piece Schumann wrote in 1831 in which he created two imaginary characters who discussed a work by Chopin: Florestan (Schumann’s extroverted, passionate side) and Eusebius (Schumann’s more poetic, introspective side). Adam finds that the music in Schumann’s concerto goes back and forth between these two personalities, describing the first movement as dark and brooding, the second as a conversation between the piano and the orchestra, and the third as triumphant.

The Evanston Symphony is delighted to welcome the extraordinarily talented Adam Neiman to our stage to interpret one of Schumann’s most profound works for piano. 🎻

—Kelly Brest van Kempen



PHOTO BY YANCEY HUGHES

The Evanston Symphony Gospel Choir sing with the Evanston Children's Choir as Santa looks on

Tap-Dancing Reindeer and Three Sleigh Rides!

The ETHS auditorium was full of holiday joy on December 2 when the Evanston Symphony Orchestra played its annual Holiday Concert. Audience members, young and old, were delighted with the return of the tap-dancing reindeer from the Evanston Dance Ensemble. Young dancers from ede2 performed to the *Troika* (a sleigh drawn by three horses) from Prokofiev's *Lt. Kije Suite*, and wonderful ESO musicians played another two sleigh rides. The Evanston Symphony Holiday Gospel Choir sang *Stand By Me*, accompanied by the full orchestra, a song made famous from Prince Harry and Meghan Markle's royal wedding. The North Shore Choral Society and Evanston Children's Choir then joined the orchestra for some joyous carols as well as several excerpts from Handel's *Judas Maccabeus* in honor of the first night of Hanukkah. The finale of the concert was a performance of 'Hallelujah' from Quincy Jones 'Handel's Messiah: A Soulful Celebration' with the three choirs and full orchestra that brought the audience to its feet. What a great way to showcase the immense diversity and creativity found in Evanston!



PHOTO BY YANCEY HUGHES

Tap-dancing reindeer from the Evanston Dance Ensemble

The ESO would like to thank the Mabadi Group, First Bank & Trust/Byline Bank, and many others for their generous support of this concert. 🎵

Lucky raffle winner!

The Evanston Symphony Orchestra would like to thank Christopher Duquet Fine Jewelry, Caroline Dehnert-Moyer, and The Spice House for generous donations to our raffle. Proceeds from the raffle help fund our free music education programs in Head Start. Elizabeth Cohen, a viola player with ESO, was the lucky winner of the jewelry gift certificate. 🎵



PHOTO BY YANCEY HUGHES

Raffle winner Elizabeth Cohen with Chris Duquet



EVANSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

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The Evanston Symphony Orchestra recognizes and honors individuals who have generously provided for its future through bequests, trusts, and other life income gifts as members of the KeyNote Society. Membership in the KeyNote Society is a reflection of the highest individual commitment to the future of the Evanston Symphony Orchestra. KeyNote Society members establish their personal legacy by continuing the musical tradition of the ESO and maintaining its musical heritage in our community.

The Evanston Symphony Orchestra would like to thank the following KeyNote Society members:

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