

# Evanston Symphony celebrates Romanticism



**Kate Liu**

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## Dorothy Andries

For Sun-Times Media

Oct. 23 2:17 p.m.

The Evanston Symphony Orchestra opens its 69th season, “Romanticism Endures,” with a new violinist in the concertmaster’s chair and a young pianist from the North Shore as soloist.

The program, “Russian Rhapsodies,” was chosen by the orchestra’s music director, Lawrence Eckerling, who will conduct his more than 100 musicians in Rachmaninoff’s lush “Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini,” Prokofiev’s monumental Symphony No. 5, and Mieczyslaw Weinberg’s “Rhapsody on Moldavian Themes.”

The Weinberg opens the concert. The composer, of Russian/Polish heritage, wrote the work just after World War II to celebrate his Moldavian-Jewish heritage. “This will be its Midwest premiere,” said Eckerling. “It opens with slow brooding music, but the second part is a dance, a real toe-tapper with Klezmer-like elements.”

Prokofiev’s rich and colorful Fifth Symphony, which concludes the afternoon, premiered in the winter of 1945. “It provides a sonic experience of variety and contrast for both players and audience,” Eckerling said, adding “I cannot think of anything that thrills me more than the ending of this symphony. Yes, this was written during World War II, but we shouldn’t think of that so much as the words of the composer, who said his work was ‘about the grandeur of the human spirit.’”

Set in the middle of the program is Rachmaninoff’s popular “Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini.” “People are familiar with the 18th Variation,” said Eckerling, “but there are actually 24 variations.” Some run together, he explained, but they can more or less be divided into three sections — fast, slow, fast.

Soloist in the rich “Rhapsody” is Kate Liu, 20, who, born in Singapore, came to the United States at the age 8. “I started piano lessons when I was 4,” she explained, “but my teachers here were Emilio del Rosario at the Music Institute of Chicago, who was just wonderful, and after he died Micah Yui. My family moved to Winnetka to be closer to my teachers.”

Liu is now in her third year at the Curtis Institute in Philadelphia.

“Everyone loves this piece and pianists all love to play it,” said Liu. “Mr. Eckerling wanted it on the program and when he asked me, I told him I was eager to play it.”

Julie Fischer of Skokie is the first new concertmaster of the Evanston Symphony Orchestra in about 25 years, succeeding Julian Aaron.

Eckerling explained. “Some people applied (for the post) and we reached out to some others. Julie was not in the orchestra, but she is on the faculty at the Music Institute of Chicago and she is a consummate musician. She has a beautiful sound.”

“I wanted to be in the Evanston Symphony,” Fischer declared, “because they play exciting, challenging music, and I want to keep challenging myself as an artist and musician.”

### ‘Russian Rhapsodies’

**RUSSIAN RHAPSODIES**

Evanston Symphony Orchestra, Pick-Staiger Concert Hall, 50 Arts Circle Drive, Evanston

2:30 p.m. Sunday, Oct. 26

Tickets at door \$35/\$30 seniors/\$5 full-time students, children 12 and younger free, but must have an assigned seat.

See [evanstonsymphony.org](http://evanstonsymphony.org) or call (847) 864-8804

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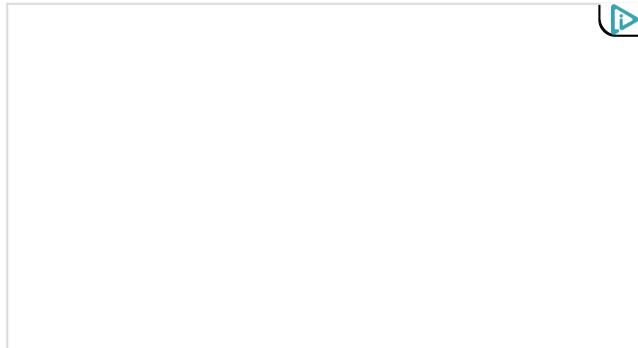
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