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FALL 2023

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Director's Welcome



On behalf of the El Paso Symphony Board of Trustees, conductor, musicians and staff, we are so pleased to welcome you to our 93rd season.

We've seen so many changes over the years, especially in technology. With its constant emerging developments, technology has changed the way we listen to music, watch a movie and take in our news. It has made the arts more accessible to a broader audience while creating a more competitive atmosphere for arts organizations as live performances compete for audiences through digital streaming.

One thing that has not changed for EPSO in 93 years is our ability to present some of the greatest music ever written in a live concert setting. There is nothing like watching and listening to a full orchestra perform

Beethoven's or Mozart's greatest works. It is as beautiful, transformative and powerful today as it was when those pieces were written in the 18th century.

This season is titled "Symphonic Superheroes." It celebrates symphonic music and its legendary composers. Throughout the season, EPSO will perform music by Mozart, Shostakovich, Debussy, Beethoven, Tchaikovsky, Richard Strauss and John Williams to name a few. We open in September with pianist Dmitry Ulasjuk performing Mozart's *Piano Concerto No. 21*. It's a meeting of superheroes in October with the music of John Williams and Richard Strauss. The December concert celebrates the sparkling sounds of the holidays Broadway style — a treat for the entire family.

In addition, EPSO is thrilled to present *Star Wars: A New Hope Live in Concert* on October 7 at the Plaza Theatre. The El Paso Symphony Orchestra will accompany the 1977 classic film by performing Oscar®-winning composer John Williams' musical score. Don't miss it!

We'll be back in the new year with "Fantastic Classics" in January, featuring Debussy's evocative *La Mer* and Mendelssohn's *Concerto for Violin & Piano* with violinist Kurt Nikkanen and pianist Maria Asteriadou. Beethoven's and Tchaikovsky's 6th symphonies are the main attractions in February. The April classical concerts end our 93rd season in spectacular form with music by Gershwin, Rachmaninoff, Debussy and Prokofiev in "Tone Poems in Concert."

With the continued dedication of our Board of Trustees, conductor, musicians, and staff and your commitment to attend our events, we will continue to flourish and create beautiful music for the next 93 years. ***We are the longest continuously running symphony in the Lone Star State and we plan to keep it that way!***

Thank you for joining us tonight. Enjoy the concert performed by El Paso's finest musicians under the baton of our dynamic leader, Bohuslav Rattay!

Warmest regards,

Ruth Ellen Jacobson
Executive Director

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FOR YOUR CONVENIENCE...

The El Paso Symphony Theatre Box Office, located in the Plaza Theatre, is open every Friday of concert week from 5:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m., and on Saturdays of concert week from 4:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m. You may continue to purchase tickets by telephone on these two days through the EPSO Ticket Hotline, (915) 532-EPSO (532-3776). Ticket exchanges or purchase of additional tickets on both concert days will be handled at the theater box office. The El Paso Symphony office is located in the Abraham Chavez Theatre, One Civic Center Plaza, El Paso, Texas 79901.

Tickets are available online at **www.epso.org** or **ticketmaster.com**

EPSO Season Calendar

SEPTEMBER 9

7:00pm Music through the Decades – El Paso Country Club
2023-2024 Season Celebration

SEPTEMBER 22/23

6:30 p.m. "Opening Notes" – Philanthropy Theatre
7:30 p.m. "Heroic Beginnings" – Plaza Theatre
Bohuslav Rattay, Conductor
Dzmitry Ulasiuk, Piano

OCTOBER 7

7:30 p.m. Star Wars: A New Hope in Concert
Plaza Theatre

OCTOBER 20/21

6:30 p.m. "Opening Notes" – Philanthropy Theatre
7:30 p.m. "Superheroes: John Williams meets Richard Strauss" – Plaza Theatre
Bohuslav Rattay, Conductor

NOVEMBER 5

3:00 p.m. EPSYO Fall Concert – Chavez Theatre

DECEMBER 1/2

6:30 p.m. "Opening Notes" – Philanthropy Theatre
7:30 p.m. "A Broadway Christmas" – Plaza Theatre
Bohuslav Rattay, Conductor
Katie Travis, Soprano
UTEP Choral Union

JANUARY 19/20

6:30 p.m. "Opening Notes" – Philanthropy Theatre
7:30 p.m. "Fantastic Classics" – Plaza Theatre
Bohuslav Rattay, Conductor
Kurt Nikkanen, Violin
Maria Asteriadou, Piano

JANUARY 28

3:00 p.m. EPSYO Winter Concert – Plaza Theatre

JANUARY 30/31 & FEBRUARY 1

10:30 a.m. El Paso Electric Young People's Concerts
12:30 p.m. Abraham Chavez Theatre

FEBRUARY 16/17

6:30 p.m. "Opening Notes" – Philanthropy Theatre
7:30 p.m. "The Two Big 6s" – Plaza Theatre
Bohuslav Rattay, Conductor

MARCH 1

8:00 p.m. The Music of Queen
Plaza Theatre

MARCH 24

3:00 p.m. EPSO & EPSYO
Side by Side Concert
Abraham Chavez Theatre

APRIL 8

March Madness Fundraiser – El Paso Country Club
11:00 a.m. Golf Tournament
6:00 p.m. Dinner & NCAA Men's Basketball
Championship Game

APRIL 19/20

6:30 p.m. "Opening Notes" – Philanthropy Theatre
7:30 p.m. "Tone Poems in Concert" – Plaza Theatre
Bohuslav Rattay, Conductor
Malcolm Liu, Piano

MAY 19

3:00 p.m. EPSYO Final Concert – Plaza Theatre

Concert & Ticket Tips

Here is some helpful information to help you understand the structure of the evening's program and make your experience at the concert even more enjoyable and satisfying.

All program pages are structured in the same manner to help you follow the music (see pages 17 and 29):

- The composer's name is listed first in bold face type.
- The piece of music is listed just below the composer's name in italic.
- Movements, if any, follow in smaller regular type. Movements are like chapters in a book. They usually have a short pause between them. It isn't complete until all the chapters have been read. The conductor may keep his hands raised between movements indicating that the piece is not over.
- When the piece is over, the conductor will lower the baton completely and turn to face the audience.
- Please feel free to show your appreciation at the end of the piece.
- Interested in gaining more insight into the evening's program? Attend "Opening Notes" in the Philanthropy Theatre at 6:30 p.m. This series of pre-concert talks gives you the inside scoop on the composers, compositions and guest artists.

TICKET TIPS & POLICIES

The Symphony Box Office is located in front of the Plaza Theatre. Hours are (concert days only) Fridays from 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. and Saturdays from 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. The Box Office phone number is 231-1100. The street address is:

The Plaza Theatre
125 Pioneer Plaza
El Paso, Texas 79901

The Symphony Office, located at the Abraham Chavez Theatre, is open Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. The Symphony phone number is 532-3776.

SINGLE TICKETS go on sale two weeks prior to each concert. Tickets may be purchased over the phone at (915) 532-3776, any Ticketmaster outlet or online at www.epso.org.

TICKET EXCHANGES are offered for the convenience of season ticket holders. Tickets may be exchanged for another performance of the same program by calling the symphony office at 532-3776 at least 24 hours before the concert for which they are held.

FLEX PASSES may be redeemed at the symphony office or the theater box office. Flex Tickets may be redeemed by mail after the pass has been received by the symphony office.

GROUP TICKETS are available at a substantial discount for groups of ten or more. Call 532-3776 for more information. All tickets are non-refundable.

EMPTY SEATS DON'T APPLAUD! If you cannot attend a concert for which you have tickets, please return them to the symphony office. The value of your ticket will be acknowledged as a contribution, but more importantly, your seat can be occupied by another person. **Ticket returns are accepted until concert time by calling 532-3776 or mailing your tickets to the Symphony Office, P.O. Box 180, El Paso, Texas 79942.**

EPSO ADMINISTRATION

Ruth Ellen Jacobson, Executive Director
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Chair's Greeting



The El Paso Symphony Orchestra is the longest continuously running orchestra in the State of Texas, now in our 93rd season. The Artistic Advisement Committee worked hard with Maestro Bohuslav Rattay over the past several months to develop concert programming aimed at being one of our best seasons ever.

The September concert features award-winning pianist Dzmitry Ulasiuk playing Mozart's *Piano Concerto No. 21* in C major, a piece that EPSO last featured more than twenty years ago. The concert also includes Rimsky-Korsakov *Capriccio Espagnol* and Shostakovich *Symphony 10* in E minor. October brings a Superheroes concert, featuring selections by John Williams paired with Richard Strauss *Ein Heldenleben* "A Hero's Life." December brings a Broadway Christmas featuring soprano Katie Travis and the UTEP Choral Union.

In keeping our long-standing tradition, we present the January concert in collaboration with El Paso Pro Musica, with the Mendelssohn *Concerto for Violin and Piano* in D minor, featuring a husband and wife team, Kurt Nikkanen on violin and award-winning Maria Asteriadou on piano. January also features Debussy's lovely *La Mer* and Beethoven's *Fidelio Overture*. The February concert will feature two big sixes, Beethoven *Symphony No. 6* and Tchaikovsky *Symphony No. 6*. And finally, in April, we will close the season with tone poems, featuring Debussy *Afternoon of a Faun*, Gershwin *American in Paris*, Rachmaninoff *The Isle of the Dead*, and Prokofiev *Piano Concerto No. 3* in C major, featuring award-winning pianist Malcolm Liu.

One of the jewels of the Symphony is the opening notes program prior to each subscription concert in the Philanthropy Theater adjacent to the Plaza Theater (entrance near the box office). Notes begin an hour prior to the concert, at 6:30 p.m., and provide not only a more fulfilling and enriched concert experience but also a way to beat the parking rush and ensure an on-time concert arrival.

Outside of our normal subscription series, on October 7, the orchestra will play the music of *Star Wars: A New Hope*, alongside the film. We have a fabulous fundraiser the following week, October 13, Tomatoville, a gourmet BLT party, with live music throughout the evening, to benefit our Tocando youth program whose mission is to empower children in challenging social and economic conditions to improve their sense of community and opportunity. November brings the fall concert for the El Paso Symphony Youth Orchestras featuring over 200 area students.

Watch our website for more exciting events in the spring, including our annual *March Madness* fundraiser with viewing of the final basketball game of the NCAA men's tournament.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees of the El Paso Symphony Orchestra, I thank you for your support of our fabulous symphony orchestra, helping to make this one of our best seasons ever. I hope to see you at many concerts in years to follow.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Marise".

Marise Textor, Chair, EPSO

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Czech-American conductor Bohuslav Rattay is a busy ambassador for classical music, working with orchestras across the globe to produce symphonic works of all kinds to a diverse audience. Rattay is the music director of the El Paso Symphony Orchestra, currently in his seventh season; and the Midland Symphony Orchestra in Michigan. As he gains a reputation as one of the finest young talents of his generation, Mr. Rattay combines impassioned and virtuosic musicianship with a determination to bring great music into the lives of all people.

An enthusiastic promoter for classical music, Mr. Rattay strives

to bring the traditional and innovative together in a manner exciting and fresh for his audience. He is renowned for his unique concert programs, incorporating special audience discussions and including multi-media elements. He is also appreciated for his passion for the classics, with special appreciation often given to his insightful understanding of the music of his native Bohemia. Rattay has been praised for his ability to communicate the depth of a diverse range of music to his audience, for the classics, "Rattay is certainly the man for Tchaikovsky's fourth" (*Charleston Today*, 2011), and for the fashionable, "Watching him conduct is like watching a painter creating rich imagery to live music on a large canvas" (*El Paso Times*, 2013). His intelligent and vast programming allows him to connect to a broad range of audience, creating new symphony-goers while entertaining the enthusiasts.

Rattay's talents and abilities are highly praised. He is internationally acclaimed by critics and audiences alike for his fresh and inspired musical interpretations. He has received accolades for his "vibrant" performances and his "elegant panache," (*Charleston City Paper*, 2009), his ability to lead the orchestra with his "infectious zest and physicality," (*Midland Daily News*, 2013), and his one-of-a-kind artistry,

bringing "personal perspective... that will be remembered for many years," (*Duluth News Tribune*, 2012).

His overflowing passion for classical music is highly solicited, recently appearing as guest conductor with the Colorado Symphony, the Duluth-Superior Symphony, the Hilton Head Symphony, and the Teplice Philharmonic in his native Czech Republic. Other recent engagements include the Virginia Symphony, West Michigan Symphony, Prague's Dvořák Symphony Orchestra, and the Charleston (SC) Symphony, where he received several critical accolades. He has also conducted the National Symphony Orchestra as part of the National Conducting Institute and was selected by the American Symphony Orchestra League to participate in its Conducting Fellowship Program.

Believing in the power of education, Mr. Rattay is a committed pedagogue of the younger generations. Rattay is the conductor of the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) Symphony Orchestra. He has been a music faculty member of the College of William and Mary, Ball State University, and is a frequent guest conductor of all-state and youth orchestras across the United States. The combination of his youthful energy along with his conducting skills make him highly valued as an inspirational mentor.

Mr. Rattay holds degrees from the Prague Conservatory, Rice University and the Peabody Institute of Music. He names Gustav Meier, Larry Rachleff, Benjamin Kamins, and Neeme Jarvi as his most influential teachers.

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EPSYO 2023-2024 CONCERT SERIES

NOVEMBER 5, 2023

FALL CONCERT

3:00pm Abraham Chavez Theatre

MARCH 24, 2024

SIDE BY SIDE CONCERT

3:00pm Plaza Theatre
featuring EPSO, EPSYO and TOCANDO

JANUARY 28, 2024

WINTER CONCERT

3:00pm Plaza Theatre

MAY 19, 2024

FINAL CONCERT

3:00pm Plaza Theatre

September Guest Artist



DZMITRY ULASIUK, Piano

Dzmityr Ulasiuk is emerging on the American scene after winning over audiences in Europe with his ferocious technical skills yet quietly refined ability to coax every detail, note, and lyrical phrase out of the keyboard. Dzmityr amazes audiences worldwide, performing solo recitals in Ukraine, Russia, Poland, Germany, Lithuania, Belarus, Estonia, and Croatia as well as in China, Japan, Spain, Costa Rica and the United States. Soft-spoken and humble, Dzmityr has a fast-growing reputation for electrifying performances, prodigious technique, and evocative interpretations.

Dzmityr was raised in an environment of classical music performance in Minsk, Belarus. Within one year of professional studies at the State Academy of Music, he made his solo debut with an all-Chopin program in his hometown. A year later, he appeared internationally in the Beethoven Festival in Bonn, Germany, performing Beethoven's Symphony #7 as arranged for piano solo by Franz Liszt.

Dr. Dzmityr Ulasiuk is known for his exquisite interpretations and mesmerizing performances, which have been broadcast on Belorussian, Croatian and Polish radio and television. He recorded a CD of Prokofiev and Rachmaninoff works released by Centaur Records in April of 2019. He recorded a second CD of all Scriabin piano music, which was released in 2022. Additional CDs of Scriabin's piano works are planned to have a complete set of the composer's piano music.

After winning the Svetislav Stancic International Piano Competition in 2007, Dzmityr toured Croatia. Other performances include concerts with the National Odessa Philharmonic, the Arthur Rubinstein Symphony, Belarussian Philharmonic Orchestra, Classic-Avantegard Chamber Orchestra, and the Meadows Symphony in Dallas in addition to solo performances in China, Russia, Poland, and Croatia.

A winner or laureate of multiple international piano competitions, Dzmityr has experienced considerable success, including Grand Prize Winner, 2017 25th Fryderyck Chopin International Piano Competition, Corpus Christi, Texas; 2018 Grand Winner, Kaleidoscope International Music Competition, Los Angeles, California; and Gold Medal, 2019 Vienna International Music Competition.

Dzmityr has been an invited jurist for the Los Angeles International Liszt Competition, the International Keyboard Odyssiad® & Festival, U.S.A. in Fort Collins, Colorado, and the Steinway Youth Competition in Dallas, Texas to name a few. He has performed in piano trios, quartets, quintets, both large and small chamber orchestras, and has collaborated with vocal as well as instrumental soloists. He is the epitome of musical professionalism when it comes to piano performance.

Dzmityr holds a Bachelor's degree, a Master's degree, and a Concert Artist's Diploma from the Belarus State Academy of Music, where he studied with Professor Liudmila S. Shelomentseva. To entice him to come to the United States, he received the prestigious Lili Kraus Scholarship to study with Dr. Tamás Ungár in the Artist Diploma program at Texas Christian University. He also has a Performers Diploma from the Meadows School of the Arts at Southern Methodist University, where he studied with Professor Joaquín Achúcarro and was named a Legacy Artist of the Joaquín Achúcarro Foundation. For his DMA, Dzmityr studied with Dr. Pamela Mia Paul at the University of North Texas, and held a teaching fellowship.

September Program

Friday, September 22, 2023
Saturday, September 23, 2023
7:30 p.m. Plaza Theatre

BOHUSLAV RATTAY, Conductor
DZMITRY ULASIUK, Piano

RIMSKY-KORSAKOV

Capriccio Espagnol, op. 34

Alborada

Variazioni

Alborada

Scena e canto gitano

Fandango asturiano

MOZART

Piano Concerto No. 21, K. 467, C major

Allegro maestoso

Andante

Allegro vivace assai

Intermission

SHOSTAKOVICH

Symphony No. 10, op. 93, E minor

Moderato

Allegro

Allegretto – Largo – Più mosso

Andante – Allegro – L'istesso tempo

Programs and artists are subject to change.

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the Texas Commission on the Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts.*

September Program Notes

Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov

Born March 18, 1844 – Tikhvin, near Novgorod

Died June 2, 1908 – Liubensk, near St. Petersburg

Capriccio espagnole, op.34

Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov's skills revolved around Program Music: Music intentionally linked to an outside theme or narrative. Nearly all of Rimsky-Korsakov's works that make their way into concert halls today are programmatic in nature and immensely effective. Rimsky-Korsakov had the ability to not just set a piece of music to a pre-existing story and create sounds to match; he could immerse the listener into entirely different cultures and flavor his compositions in a way that could fool you into thinking you're listening to another composer entirely.

Scheherazade (1888), for example, takes us soaring through the tales of the epic Middle Eastern folk-tale collection *One Thousand and One Nights* while capturing the voice of the frame narrator herself (Scheherazade) using beautiful solo violin passages.

Rimsky-Korsakov also applies this effective approach to composition in his 1887 orchestral suite, *Capriccio espagnol*. It is a thrilling, bite-sized example of what Rimsky-Korsakov's writing is all about. In five short movements, the composer transports us to Asturias, a region in the north of Spain. The entire piece is based on dance music heard in Asturias, and even goes as far as to call for the imitation of Spanish instruments. "Quasi guitarra", for example, calls for the string section to "strum" their instruments like a guitar, and

is seen in various places throughout the work.

Capriccio espagnol is an incredibly clever achievement, especially when noting that the composer was in fact Russian, and whose upbringing was rooted in inspiration from nationalism.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Born January 27, 1756 – Salzburg, Austria

Died December 5, 1791 – Vienna, Austria

Piano Concerto No. 21, K. 467, C major

If there is one composer whose legend and talent have become immortalized throughout both academia and popular culture, it is Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. Through records, compact discs, streaming services, television, and film, we have all come to love the stories and the music behind the man who supposedly had quite the giggle. But if we slow down, take a closer listen, and ask ourselves, "What was Mozart the best at?" What we hear surely will make us smile.

The great clue as to what might be Mozart's finest body of work comes from Joseph Haydn. Haydn was a mentor to Mozart, and the two respected each other deeply. Haydn was an astoundingly prolific and important composer. Apart from writing 104 symphonies, 67 string quartets, 26 operas, and countless more works across many genres, he was also the first composer to launch several of these genres into the realms of popularity. There was one genre, however, that Haydn barely explored: The piano concerto. Haydn only completed approximately 10 of them, a few of which have not been completely authenticated.

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But why? How could a man with seemingly limitless compositional potential for the times avoid such a beautiful genre? Perhaps, out of respect, because he couldn't match the magnificent piano concertos being written by his friend and pupil, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart.

If you could only pick one of Mozart's 27 piano concertos to listen to, *No. 21 in C, K. 467* would be a superb choice. Written in 1785, it has all of the typical pleasures found in a Mozart piano concerto: Charm, cleverness, catchiness, and to wrap it all up, extreme listenability. Mozart's catalogue of piano concertos has been labeled by much of academia as one of the finest bodies of work ever composed.

K. 467 is also referred to by the nickname "Elvira Madigan," having been used as the theme music in a film of that name. The 1967 film relies on raw emotion to draw its audience in, therefore linking Mozart's 21st piano concerto to the musical "tearjerker" category nearly 200 years later.

Little did Mozart know that he would compose one of the 20th century's most iconic film scores, well over 100 years before film history even begins. Regardless of whether or not you associate the "Elvira Madigan" concerto with the *Elvira Madigan* film, you are hearing one of history's best composers at the absolute top of his game.

Dimitri Shostakovich

Born September 25, 1906 – St. Petersburg, Russia

Died August 9, 1975 – Moscow, Russia

Symphony No. 10, Op. 93, E minor

From the enthusiast's standpoint, the 15 symphonies of Dimitri Shostakovich can be divided into three categories: The traditional, the avant-garde, and the "somewhere in-between." Completed in 1953, *Symphony No. 10 in E minor, Op. 93* is perhaps the best choice for those wanting to venture outside of Shostakovich's more "classical" tongue and more into the realms of not quite following the rules.

Historically, *Symphony No. 10* is the very end of a story that began in 1936, the year Joseph Stalin declared a personal war against Shostakovich. Stalin had ordered an intensely negative review be written of *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*, Shostakovich's 1934 opera. The review sent Shostakovich's career into mortal peril, and the composer had to face a grueling question: Should he write for his people or write for his bosses?

Shostakovich would spend the next 17 years tackling this question, and he would do it using six new symphonies. They are the *Fifth op. 47* through the *Tenth op. 93*, and one could easily refer to them as the "Stalin Symphonies." Stalin was ultimately the final judge of these works, and the music's success and reputation was at his mercy.

Symphony No. 10 is unique, being the only symphony in this given set to be written after Joseph Stalin's death. It is essentially a musical review of the terror-filled reign of Stalin, told by Shostakovich. This

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point was made clear by the composer himself, who stated that the symphony's second movement is a portrait of Stalin himself. Quite a pairing, as the second movement contains some of the most traumatizing four minutes of music in the literature.

Symphony No. 10 is also a wonderful ambassador for Shostakovich's entire output within the genre. It is approachable, yet not entirely within the mold of symphonies past. For instance, the massive first movement is rooted in the traditional "sonata form," but is slower than normal and hides its structural DNA well, while the second movement is intended as the traditional scherzo, but nothing of the sort will come to mind upon listening. And, of course, throughout the entire symphony

are the familiar Shostakovich sounds and formulas that we all know and love, especially the classic four-note motif D, E-flat, C, B that spell out Shostakovich's initials.

Fans of the symphony genre know how fortunate we are that Shostakovich contributed heavily to its 20th century persona. Shostakovich's 10th is without a doubt one of its brightest-shining stars.

Nathan Black is the general manager of the El Paso Symphony Youth Orchestras and a section cellist in the El Paso Symphony Orchestra. In addition, he produces and hosts 88.5 FM KTEP's *El Paso Symphony Orchestra Broadcast*, and as of 2022 is the resident lecturer of EPSO's "Opening Notes" series.

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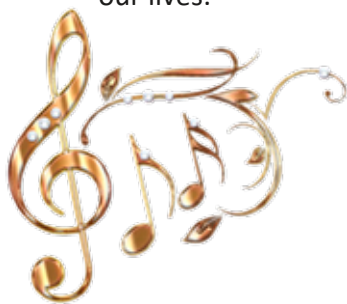
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October Program

Friday, October 20, 2023
Saturday, October 21, 2023
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BOHUSLAV RATTAY, Conductor

WAGNER

Prelude & Liebestod from Tristan & Isolde

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Superman Main Theme

Scherzo for Motorcycle & Orchestra from Indiana Jones

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Battle of the Heroes from Star Wars

Intermission

STRAUSS

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October Program Notes

Richard Wagner

Born May 22, 1813 – Leipzig, Germany

Died February 13, 1883 – Venice, Italy

“Prelude and Liebestod” from *Tristan and Isolde*

Richard Wagner is perhaps the most extreme personality in the history of romantic music. From his obsession with Beethoven to his participation in the May Revolution of 1848, Wagner imprinted excitement and shock into everything he did. Of course, there is no exception with his operas, which he referred to as “Gesamtkunstwerk” (total art). Wagner believed that opera was the ultimate culmination of expressive art, being a combination of vocal and instrumental music, literature, theater, choreography, and visual art.

Wagner certainly knew how to “walk the talk” with his love for the genre. He completed 13 operas, many of which are massive in scale, such as *Die Walkure*, which takes four hours to perform. However, the truly astonishing statistic is just how involved Wagner was in all of the aspects of his operas. Traditionally, the credited composer of an opera is responsible for the work’s music only. The story and text is typically contributed by a librettist, and if necessary, a choreographer. Wagner rejected this norm and chose to undertake all of the work himself. This means that when you listen to a Wagner opera, you are hearing, seeing, and experiencing the limitless creative genius of Wagner.

Outside of the composer’s gigantic four-opera saga *Der Ring des Nibelungen* (commonly referred to as The

Ring Cycle), *Tristan and Isolde* is perhaps Richard Wagner’s most remarkable achievement. Premiered in 1865 (several years after the opera’s completion), *Tristan and Isolde* takes nearly five hours to perform. It is based on the 12th century romance story of the same name, and is a far more “human” and intimate source material than other works Wagner had set to music. Wagner typically would choose subjects and tales from German folklore and fantasy, such as the hero Siegfried, the Valkaries, and Brunhilda.

Similar to Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*, *Tristan and Isolde* is a tale of forbidden love, filled with high passion and nerve-racking sensual scenes. It is therefore a unique musical gift from the composer given its dealings with subject matter far more relatable and ordinary.

The performance you will hear this evening is the most popular abridged form of the piece presented by today’s symphony orchestras, and is also the ultimate “spoiler” of the plot. The “Prelude and Liebestod” literally presents the very beginning and very end of the opera. The “Prelude” is remarkable for many of its own reasons, most notably its use of extended harmonies which delivered an experience at the premiere that audiences had never heard the likes of before, and its foreshadowing of the incredible emotional tension and release viewers experience over the next five hours. And speaking of emotion, the “Liebestod” is the final scene of the opera, when Isolde stands over the dead body of Tristan, lamenting in despair.

It is curious that the most popular form of the piece regularly heard in the concert hall revolves around the opera’s themes

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of passionate despair, but nonetheless it is some of the most beautiful sound created by Richard Wagner.

John Williams

Born February 8, 1932 – New York City, New York

John Williams is a remarkable human being. No one living has managed to match the musical immortality of John Williams. He has immersed himself into our daily lives, whether we know it or not, with scores that bring us immense joy as we practice a great pastime: Watching movies, whether it be *Indiana Jones*, *Star Wars*, or *Home Alone*, you know his music and he's made your life better.

John Williams turns 92 this winter. Many consider the music of *Jaws* in 1975 to be his debut, but that is merely William's first collaboration with Steven Spielberg. His true roots reach back to the 1950s when he studied classical piano at The Juilliard School and played jazz as Johnny Williams in the evenings.

Having a career that is so prolific and long is every musician's dream. Tonight, we celebrate that by listening to some immortal tunes that first came to us with popcorn, family, and smiles including themes from *Superman*, *Schindler's List*, and *Star Wars*.

Richard Strauss

Born June 11, 1864 – Munich, Germany
Died September 8, 1949 – Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany

Ein Heldenleben

Richard Strauss' 1898 tone poem *Ein Heldenleben* ("A Hero's Life") holds a

very special place in the orchestral repertoire. If you mention the name Richard Strauss to an orchestral musician, you will see their face turn red as sweat forms on their brow. Strauss' tone poems are the most challenging works performed today and are nearly always required in auditions for those wishing to earn a seat in a symphony orchestra. The payoff is worth it, however. Strauss' symphonic music is unique and unmatched in its character, demand, and aural experience.

Ein Heldenleben is one of Richard Strauss' most celebrated works, given that it is near the end of his contributions to the tone poem genre. By this time, famous pieces such as *Don Juan*, *Death and Transfiguration*, and *Also sprach Zarathustra* were complete and Strauss was ready to try something new. And try something new he did- with one of music's most egotistical autobiographies ever to be written down on manuscript paper.

Ein Heldenleben contains six sections, all played continuously, and tells the basic story of an unnamed protagonist simply referred to as "The Hero." When one reads the names of the movements, such as "The Hero's Adversaries," "The Hero's Companion," "The Hero at Battle," etc., one assumes they are or will be listening to a typical "Wagnerian"-style folkloric adventure that fills the catalogues of German program music throughout the 19th century. Until, however, you notice something familiar. Strauss begins quoting himself – his other tone poems, to be precise. If you are familiar with Strauss' tone poems up to this point, you will hear his own music quoted throughout *Ein Heldenleben* nearly 40

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times, which leads you to realize who the "hero" in this story really is.

There is no primary-source material confirming Strauss' intention of writing music about himself, but that is hardly necessary, there are many clues that point to that conclusion. The first is the rather arrogant nature of the composer. Strauss was very fond of himself both on the record and within his personal life, and this can be found easily via letters and interview transcripts. This plays into the composer's rather crude request to conduct *Ein Heldenleben's* premiere. Strauss dedicated the piece to the Concertgebouw Orchestra and its conductor Willem Mengelberg, which in normal circumstances would clearly constitute that orchestra and that conductor premiering the work. However, the final honor fell onto the composer himself who led the first performance in the spring of 1899 in Frankfurt.

The other clue comes from the critics of the day. Upon hearing it for the first time and realizing what Strauss was up to, the response to *Ein Heldenleben* was largely negative. Critics were quite offended by Strauss' egotistical tribute, and some went as far as to call the piece "hideous," "revolting," and "ugly," while Strauss himself was referred to as a "lunatic."

These opinions absolutely must be disregarded today. Strauss is long gone and so the need for mystery about *Ein Heldenleben*. What remains is glorious music and the deepest respect for the man who pushed the symphony orchestra harder than it ever had been, and ever has been.

Nathan Black is the general manager of the El Paso Symphony Youth Orchestras and a section cellist in the El Paso Symphony Orchestra. In addition, he produces and hosts 88.5 FM KTEP's *El Paso Symphony Orchestra Broadcast*, and as of 2022 is the resident lecturer of EPSO's "Opening Notes" series.



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KATIE TRAVIS

KATIE TRAVIS is an award-winning singer/actor best known for playing Christine Daae in *The Phantom of The Opera* throughout North America. Broadway: *The Phantom of the Opera* Regional: Cosette in *Les Miserables* at The MUNY, Fireside Theater, Liederkrantz

Opera Theater. Katie has performed with the Saginaw, Midland, El Paso and Mt. Rainier Symphonies. In the fall of 2022, Katie did a 37-city tour of Japan as a soloist with the Orchestra Japan in their "Disney On Classic" show. She is a winner of the Lys Symonette award in the Lotte Lenya Competition.

In addition to her private voice studio in NYC, Katie has taught as an adjunct professor of voice for the Musical Theater program at Montclair State University and is currently on faculty at the Penn State School of Theater and Long Island University. Katie holds a BM in Vocal Performance from Central Michigan University, an MFA in Musical Theater Voice Pedagogy from Penn State University and a certificate in Vocology from Lamar University.

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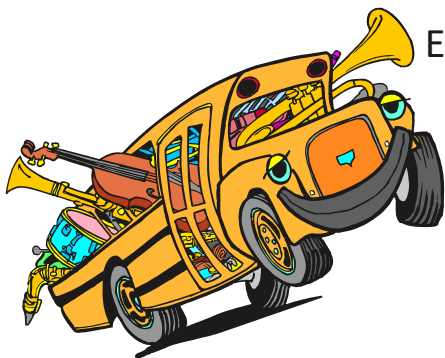


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The El Paso Symphony Orchestra is a 501 C (3) not-for-profit organization. Contributions to EPSO are tax deductible to the extent authorized by law.

- ◆ The Youth Orchestra Program is the largest component of the EPSO's educational mission. The **El Paso Symphony Youth Orchestra** (EPSYO) serves over 300 students each year. EPSYO students participate in weekly rehearsals and perform concerts in El Paso's finest concert halls. Their relationship with the EPSO allows EPSYO members access to the musicians of the EPSO through coaching, rehearsals, and the annual Side-by-Side concert.
- ◆ EPSO's after-school program, **Tocando Music Project**, is designed to engage disconnected youth through free intensive music instruction, academic tutoring, and nutritional snacks.
- ◆ The **Young People's Concerts** are annual concerts held each year for the past 81 years. Six concerts are presented free of charge to 12,000 5th grade area students.
- ◆ Ensembles in the schools programs, **Brass in Class** and **Strings in Schools**, perform on-site concerts annually at over 25 elementary and middle schools throughout the El Paso.
- ◆ Our **Kids for Classics** offers over 400 free tickets to each of the classical subscription concerts to area school districts for students at various schools. Backstage tours and a pre-concert lecture designed specifically for students are provided.
- ◆ Free **Angel tickets** to the El Paso Symphony classical concerts are available for students.
- ◆ Free tickets to the classical concerts are provided to our **Symphony Seniors**, which targets low-income elderly residents.
- ◆ **Opening Notes** are lively and insightful discussions designed to enhance the enjoyment of each classical performance. These talks are presented one hour prior to the classical concerts in the Philanthropy Theatre.
- ◆ **Golden Notes** targets elderly citizens who are unable to attend classical concerts. This outreach program presents on-site concerts by small groups of musicians at area nursing homes, retirement villages and adult day care centers.

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Tocando programming takes place after-school Monday through Thursday at Guillen Middle School in El Segundo Barrio and in-school and after-school at Tornillo Elementary PreK - 8 School.



Tocando provides opportunities to perform in the community on many stages including the Plaza Theatre.



Tocando is presented in partnership with the PlayUSA initiative of Carnegie Hall's Weill Music Institute. Lead support for PlayUSA is provided by the Fund II Foundation. The Weill Music Institute's programs are made available to a nationwide audience, in part, by an endowment grant from the Citi Foundation.

www.tocandomusicproject.org



The El Paso Symphony Orchestra's Tocando Music Project is an in-school and after-school program that provides music learning and performing opportunities to elementary, middle and high school students.

Tocando's mission is to empower children in challenging social and economic conditions to improve their sense of community and opportunity. Music is used as a vehicle for children to acquire valuable tools of teamwork, self-confidence, leadership, and academic success.

Tocando began in September 2013 at Hart Elementary School in El Segundo Barrio. Tocando expanded to Guillen Middle School in 17-18, concentrating on schools in the feeder pattern of Bowie High School. In January 2020, Tocando expanded to Tornillo, Texas with programming at the elementary and intermediate schools.

Collaborations with UTEP creates a pathway to college for students beginning in elementary school and continuing throughout their education careers.



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