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EPSO

BOHUSLAV RATTAY, MUSIC DIRECTOR

2023-2024 SEASON

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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 the second half of our 93rd season.

We are aware that with today's technology, most of us have unlimited access to music in the palm of our hand — yet, there is no experience quite like a live orchestra. Music is transformative, powerful, and a flight to the imagination. So, whether you are seeking inspiration or escape, our mission is to provide you with musical experiences that will take you away from the ordinary.

This season has been a celebration of the best of symphonic music.

Our celebration continues with travels to the seas, walks in nature, and a trip to Paris. We open in January with "Fantastic Classics." The concert opens with Mendelssohn's *Concerto for Piano, Violin and Strings* featuring husband-and-wife duo violinist Kurt Nikkanen and pianist Maria Asteriadou. It closes with Debussy's evocative *La Mer*, a symphonic portrait of the beauties of the sea. Beethoven's and Tchaikovsky's powerhouse 6th symphonies are the main attractions in February. Beethoven's 6th symphony, also known as "Pastoral," is his homage to nature.

Join us on March 1 for the ultimate celebration of The Music of Queen. The El Paso Symphony is joined by a full rock band to perform hit after hit of one of the greatest bands of all time. The April classical concerts end our 93rd season in spectacular form with "Tone Poems in Concert," featuring Gershwin's *An American in Paris*, plus music by Rachmaninoff, Debussy and Prokofiev.

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,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ruth Ellen Jacobson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Ruth Ellen Jacobson
Executive Director



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10	El Paso Symphony Orchestra	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.	
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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. 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 18, 29 and 35):

- 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

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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 to develop concert programming aimed at being one of our best seasons ever.

In keeping with our long-standing tradition, we present the January concert in collaboration with El Paso Pro-Musica, on the Mendelssohn *Concerto for Violin and Piano in D minor*, featuring the husband-and-wife team of Kurt Nikkanen on violin and 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's *Symphony No. 6* and Tchaikovsky's *Symphony No. 6*. In April, we will close the season with tone poems, featuring Debussy's *Afternoon of a Faun*, Gershwin's *An American in Paris*, Rachmaninoff's *The Isle of the Dead*, and Prokofiev's *Piano Concerto No. 3* in C major, featuring award-winning pianist Malcolm Liu.

One of the jewels of the Symphony is the program talks prior to each subscription concert in the Philanthropy Theatre adjacent to the Plaza Theatre (entrance near the box office). They 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. We hope you will join us!

Outside of our normal subscription series, the orchestra will be joined by a full rock band to perform the *The Music of Queen* on March 1. On March 24, members of the El Paso Symphony Orchestra, the El Paso Symphony Youth Orchestras and Tocando come together for a spectacular "Side by Side" concert. Our annual *March Madness* fundraiser on April 8 kicks-off with a friendly round of golf and viewing of the championship game of the NCAA men's basketball tournament. The El Paso Symphony Youth Orchestra, featuring over 200 area students, performs its winter concert on January 28 and finish its season on May 19.

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. We are already working on developing a tremendous season for 2024-2025.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marise".

Marise Textor, Chair, EPSO

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Music Director



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.

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

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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el paso symphony youth orchestras
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EPSYO members perform exciting symphonic music in El Paso's finest concert halls and get the opportunity to learn from EPSO musicians in small and large group settings. The EPSYO accepts students between the ages of 8 and 22 with at least one year of musical study.

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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

January Guest Artists



Heralded as “an artist with intense personality, virtuosic flair, unusual poise and intimate contact with style” by *The New York Times*, Greek pianist **Maria Asteriadou** is an acclaimed soloist, chamber musician and pedagogue.

A Steinway Artist, Maria Asteriadou has appeared in recitals and as soloist with orchestra in major concert halls throughout the United States, South America, Canada, and Europe. She has performed with the Moscow Radio Symphony, Academy of Saint Martin in the Fields, Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, the National Symphony of Costa Rica, Luxembourg Philharmonia, the Bucharest Chamber Orchestra, the Canadian Chamber Academy, the Athens Camerata as well as the Athens and Thessaloniki state orchestras.

A devoted chamber musician, Asteriadou has collaborated with many distinguished artists and appears in recitals worldwide presenting programs showcasing composers from Bach to Piazzolla.

Her love for her native Greece and enthusiasm for contemporary music have resulted in prestigious premieres by many of Greece’s most prominent composers, including Dimitri Mitropoulos, Nikos Skalkottas, Christos Samaras, and Yiorgos Sicillianos, as well as numerous

collaborations with the American-born Greek composer George Tsontakis, Dinos Constantinides and Christos Hatzis. In addition, she has frequently collaborated with the American composer David Noon, having also premiered his Concerto for Piano and Percussion Ensemble.

Asteriadou is also an energetic, dedicated, and passionate pedagogue. She teaches at Manhattan School of Music, Precollege Division, and at Kutztown University in Pennsylvania, where she is a Professor of Piano and Chamber Music, serves as director of the Chamber Music Outreach Program and is the Artistic Director of the Kutztown University Summer Chamber Music Festival since 2011.

She also serves as the chamber music coach for the biennial New York International Piano Competition and travels frequently to give master classes at universities and conservatories in the US and abroad. She has been an artist-faculty member at many festivals including the University of Michigan’s Summer Arts Institute, Canada’s International School of Musical Arts, El Paso Pro-Musica, the West Branch International Music Festival in New York, and the International Chamber Music Festival (FIMCE) in La Serena, Chile. Since 2017, she is an artist-in-residence at the Conservatorio Nacional de Musica in the Dominican Republic. She also serves on the board of the Hellenic American Cultural Foundation in New York and is a member of the Music Teachers National Association (MTNA).

Asteriadou holds a Doctor of Musical Arts degree from Manhattan School of Music where she was a student of Constance Keene. She received her Master of Music degree from the Juilliard School as a scholarship student of Jacob Lateiner. Following her undergraduate studies at the State Conservatory of Music in Thessaloniki, Greece, she was accepted at the Musik Hochschule in Freiburg, Germany where she studied and received her Graduate Soloist Diploma with honors.

January Guest Artists



KURT NIKKANEN, Violin

American violinist **Kurt Nikkanen** is an international soloist of the highest order. Born in Hartford, Connecticut, he began his violin studies at age of 3, later studying with Roman Totenberg and Jens Ellerman. At 12 he made his Carnegie Hall debut, performing with the New York Youth Symphony; two years later he was invited by Zubin Mehta to perform the *Paganini Concerto No.1* with the New York Philharmonic for a Young People's Concert. He studied with Dorothy DeLay at the Juilliard School.

Nikkanen regularly receives invitations from leading orchestras and presenters in the USA and Europe and has toured Japan and the Far East. He has worked with many of the world's most renowned conductors. In North America, he has appeared with the symphonies of Dallas, St. Louis, and Detroit, the Minnesota Orchestra, San Francisco Symphony, Los Angeles Philharmonic and Cleveland Orchestra, and in Europe with the BBC Symphony, Royal Philharmonic, BBC Philharmonic, Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, Rotterdam Philharmonic and the Dresden Staatskapelle. Nikkanen has given acclaimed performances of the Dvorak concerto with the Czech Philharmonic and Vladimir Ashkenazy, both in Prague and on tour in the USA, with concerts in New York and Chicago.

Nikkanen recorded Steven R. Gerber's violin concerto, which was written expressly for him, for Koch International. He performed the world premiere of Mikko Heiniö's *Concerto Alla Madre*, subsequently recording it for Sony Classical with the Turku Philharmonic under Petri Sakari and released to great acclaim in 2010. His recording of William Walton's *Violin Concerto* with the New Haven Symphony was released on the Nimbus Alliance label and was a Gramophone Magazine Critic's Choice selection for 2010.

He is married to Maria Asteriadou. The couple lives in New York City.

The January classical concerts are presented in loving memory of our dear friend and supporter Mrs. Robert M. Graham, Sr.



The musical arts in El Paso benefitted so much from her knowledge and passion.

January Program

Friday, January 20, 2024
Saturday, January 21, 2024
7:30 p.m., Plaza Theatre

BOHUSLAV RATTAY, Conductor
MARIA ASTERIADOU, Piano
KURT NIKKANEN, Violin

BEETHOVEN

Fidelio Overture, op. 72c in E minor

MENDELSSOHN

Concerto for Piano, Violin & Strings, D minor

Allegro

Adagio

Allegro molto

Intermission

DEBUSSY

La Mer

De l'aube à midi sur la mer [From Dawn to Noon on the Sea]

Jeux des vagues [Play of the Waves]

Dialogue du vent et de la mer [Dialogue of Wind and Sea]

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*With the support of the Museums & Cultural Affairs Department,
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January Program Notes

Ludwig van Beethoven

Born December 17, 1770 — Bonn, Germany

Died March 26, 1827 — Vienna, Austria

Fidelio Overture, op. 72c in E minor

If you analyze the compositional habits of the many great composers from past centuries, you will find two consistent patterns: Program music composers (music with a clear theme that is defined for the audience), and absolute music composers (music that stands alone and is defined by the listener). Ludwig van Beethoven falls quite obviously into the latter category.

These musical philosophies and quality music are not mutually exclusive. Great champions from all eras of music history exist in either category and some individuals were evenly comfortable in both. Mozart, for example, is one of the finest examples of someone who was a great master across all genres and musical philosophies, having completed hundreds of sonata-form based works in addition to twenty-two operas. Franz Schubert is also excellent here — his masterful symphonies and sonatas versus his numerous German songs — two sides of Schubert's compositional output that represent two different eras of music history.

Beethoven, as we know, was one of the most crucial musical figures, having brought us out of classicism and into romanticism. He also gifted us with some of the world's most listened-to music, such as the *Moonlight Sonata* and *Symphony No. 5*. However, Beethoven quite clearly showed us he was most comfortable sticking to one, not both,

of the musical philosophies mentioned earlier: Absolute music.

The key to this realization lies in Beethoven's opera output (or lack thereof). Beethoven completed only a single opera, *Fidelio*, which premiered in 1805. It's curious that Beethoven contributed so lightly to a beloved genre that his musical hero, Mozart, masterfully dominated. However, *Fidelio* is a highly respected and often performed work that should not be overlooked.

Fidelio is a love story infused with political commentary — a predictable setting for a work by Beethoven, who was actively interested in worldwide current events and politics. While the full opera is loved and performed regularly, the work's overture, or should I say overture(s), can easily cause confusion.

Beethoven would eventually complete four overtures for *Fidelio*. The final version that is now formally paired with the opera (and the version you will hear this evening) is simply known as the *Fidelio Overture*. It was not written until 1814, nine years after *Fidelio*'s first performance, which adds to the confusion. The remaining three overtures are performed just as often as *Fidelio*'s "official" overture but are known as *Lenore 1-3* ("Lenore" was *Fidelio*'s original title). Interestingly enough, the *Lenore* overtures are far grander and twice as long as the *Fidelio Overture* proper, pointing again to the idea that Beethoven was not entirely comfortable composing opera; his knack for monumentally grand orchestral works for the concert hall was coming through even as he was trying to simply set down an introduction for an opera.

January Program Notes

Nevertheless, Beethoven triumphed over the project. He claimed many times throughout the rest of his life that he despised the experience of *Fidelio* and that it was the most miserable labor of his career. However, Beethoven did not let his annoyances get the better of the project, and we're certainly glad about that today.

Felix Mendelssohn

February 3, 1809 Hamburg, Germany
November 4, 1847 Leipzig, Germany

Concerto for Piano, Violin & Strings, D minor

Tragically, Felix Mendelssohn was one of several composers whom society did not get to enjoy for very long. He died in Leipzig at the age of 38 due to complications caused by multiple strokes. Thankfully, the body of work he left us is extraordinary, showing tremendous mastery and respect towards the style of music that built him.

Mendelssohn is considered an early "neo-classicist," meaning he chose to pursue work in the style of an era he did not reside in. In this case, the classical era which was dominated by the sounds of Haydn and Mozart. Keeping with the "old ways" was by no means a negative trait — while being quickly launched into a new realm of creativity via the work of Ludwig van Beethoven, it was refreshing to see what classicism would have evolved into if given the chance to mature for longer. This is the void that Mendelssohn fills.

The *Concerto for Piano, Violin, and Strings in D Minor* is rarely performed, but fits the Mendelssohn bill to a tee. Written

when Mendelssohn was 14, it is a clear nod to the concertos of the past, more specifically the very late Baroque and early Classical eras. Concertos during those time periods typically featured only strings as accompaniment and utilized "ritornello" form, a structure that fell out of style by the second half of the 18th century. Both of these traits are present in Mendelssohn's *Double Concerto*. Although Mendelssohn did eventually add woodwinds to the orchestral accompaniment, it exists today in its original form as a triumphant 19th century example of a "blast to the past."

Claude Debussy

Born August 22, 1862 — Saint-Germain-en-Laye, France
Died March 25, 1918 — Paris, France

La Mer

Like many popular composers, Claude Debussy is often plagued by a select collection of his own works that have garnered the mass attention of the general public for generations. *Claire de lune* (Moonlight), *La fille aux cheveux de lin* (The Girl with the Flaxen Hair), and *Arabesque No. 1* are short piano pieces that we all can't help but smile at when we encounter them. They are prime examples of the unmistakable joyous tones that only Debussy can deliver.

However, to only focus on Debussy's ever-so-charming piano works is to miss out on the composer's much more elusive and rarer projects — compositions that require any given composer's full creative palette: Orchestral compositions.

Excluding the composer's opera *Pelleas et Melisande*, Debussy's orchestral output

January Program Notes

is slightly complicated. There are sixteen orchestral compositions crediting Debussy's name, but the vast majority of these are arrangements of piano music. If we are looking for works that were intended from their inception to be solely orchestral, the number drops to three, a number that would not usually reflect a composer's liking of the format in question. However, these three works are genuine treats that fully represent Debussy's popular soundscape, but on the grand scale.

La mer (The Sea) was completed in 1905 and is the last of the set of three works previously mentioned. It is a three-movement tone poem with the same objective as the majority of Debussy's works: Create a soundscape depicting a beauty in everyday life or nature. The movements title as follows: *De l'aube a midi sur la mer* (From Dawn to Noon on the Sea), *Jeux de vagues* (Play of the Waves), and *Dialogue du vent et de la mer* (Dialogue of the Wind and the Sea).

Debussy never fails in the area of melodic and harmonic creativity, and there is no doubt that *La mer* is a work of genius that shows us the skills of Debussy at his best. The real question is ... does *La mer* deliver on its mission?

The work's premiere in 1905 brought mostly disappointment, but for curious reasons. Critiques came in the form of ire directed at Debussy's supposedly poor attempt at depicting the ocean. Little was said about *La mer's* actual quality as a piece of symphonic music.

This brings forth the classic debate over the benefits and drawbacks of program music versus absolute music: Is it better

to put an idea into an audience's head for them, or let the audience define what they hear themselves? Ironically, no matter which route a piece forces you to travel, it is ultimately your decision as to whether you are convinced or not. Today, we most certainly are by *La mer* — a stunning achievement by one of our favorite composers. A simply gorgeous piece of music.

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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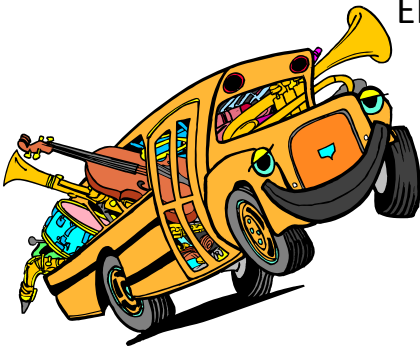
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El Paso Symphony Orchestra

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The El Paso Community Foundation's Dorrance D. and Olga B. Roderick Fund is pleased to sponsor the February 2024 symphony concerts in honor of Dorrance D. Roderick and Olga B. Roderick.

Dorrance Roderick began his career in El Paso as publisher of the *El Paso Times*, and later became president of the Newspaper Printing Corporation, which included the *El Paso Times* and the *El Paso Herald-Post*. In 1940, he expanded into broadcasting, founding KROD radio. In 1952, he established KROD (now KDBC) television.

An astute businessman, Mr. Roderick had a lifetime love of the arts. In April 1928, he heard the El Paso Symphony Orchestra on his car radio and drove immediately to the Scottish Rite Auditorium to meet the conductor. Several years later, Dorrance Roderick became the first president of the El Paso Symphony Orchestra Association, a position he held for 37 years. He had aspired to be an opera singer, and on several occasions sang with the El Paso Symphony.

Olga Roderick shared her husband's love of the symphony. She encouraged several of her dear friends to join with her to establish the Women's Committee of the Symphony.

Their daughter, Frances Roderick Axelson, continued their philanthropic traditions through the El Paso Community Foundation, both as a 37-year board member and donor. "Frannie" passed away in 2014. Through her ongoing generosity, she has left a lasting legacy with the El Paso Symphony Orchestra and the city she loved. The Plaza Theatre's lobby is named for her. The Roderick Artspace Lofts downtown is named for Frannie and her parents.

Mr. and Mrs. Roderick left a large family of grandchildren and great-grandchildren, some who live in El Paso and contribute generously to projects enriching all of our lives. They also left a philanthropic legacy, with a family of a dozen funds in the El Paso Community Foundation, which support a variety of endeavors. They are a tribute to the loving and compassionate personalities of Dorrance and Olga Roderick.

February Program

Friday, February 16, 2024
Saturday, February 17, 2024
7:30 p.m., Plaza Theatre

BOHUSLAV RATTAY, Conductor

BEETHOVEN

Symphony No. 6, Op. 68 F major (Pastorale)

Erwachen heiterer Empfindungen bei der Ankunft auf dem Lande [Awakening of cheerful feelings on arrival in the countryside]
Szene am Bach [Scene by the brook]
Lustiges Zusammensein der Landleute [Merry gathering of country folk]
Gewitter, Sturm [thunderstorm]
Hirtengesang. Frohe und dankbae Gefühle nach dem Sturm [Sheperd's song. Cheerful and thankful feelings after the storm]

INTERMISSION

TCHAIKOVSKY

Symphony No. 6, Op. 74 B minor (Pathétique Symphony)

Adagio – Allegro non troppo
Allegro con grazia
Allegro molto vivace
Finale: Adagio lamentoso

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February Program Notes

Ludwig van Beethoven

Born December 17, 1770 — Bonn, Germany

Died March 26, 1827 — Vienna, Austria

Symphony No. 6, Op. 68 F major **(Pastorale)**

One charming aspect of the classical music world is that there's something for everyone. There are dozens of genres to choose from to fit your needs. In the mood for some big orchestral sounds? Go for a symphony. How about beautiful singing with piano? Pick some German lieder. Whatever you fancy on any given day, there's great music out there for you.

On an occasional basis some composers have tried "mixing" things up, taking a genre that is clearly defined and altering it using a musical medium that is totally unrelated. This can be exciting and fresh and there are many famous examples of this in the literature — some good, some a little lackluster. But who was the first to really pull this off effectively? That would be Beethoven.

Ludwig van Beethoven's most critical works are his nine symphonies, and little did he know that they would become the gold standard examples within the genre and would be the works all other symphonies would be compared against for the next 100 years. However, there was one Beethoven symphony that stood out from the rest and set the standard for orchestral works that were trying to exist "outside the box."

Beethoven's *Symphony No. 6 in F Major, Op. 68* was a serious oddball for its time. While the traditional structure of

a symphony contains four movements, *Symphony No. 6* had five. While traditional symphonies left the interpretation of the music up to the audience, *Symphony No. 6* did it for you, by having titles, or a theme, for each movement. With that theme being nature, Beethoven nicknamed the piece "Pastoral."

The *Pastoral Symphony's* debut was a story for the ages. It was first programmed in 1808 at one of the most notorious concerts in history — a four-hour program that also featured Beethoven's *Symphony No. 5, Piano Concerto No. 4*, and *Choral Fantasy* — all challenging works that overwhelmed the performers who were working with far too little rehearsal time. Luckily for Beethoven, the concert was not as well attended as it could have been due to other concerts happening that day throughout Vienna. Regardless, it is astounding to know that some of the most famous music of all time had such a dismal first appearance.

The *Pastoral Symphony* would inspire a deluge of programmatic works for symphony orchestra, such as Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique* and the tone poems of Richard Strauss, adding to the endless evidence that points to Beethoven being music's most famous innovator.

Pyotr Ilych Tchaikovsky

Born May 7, 1840 — Votkinsk, Russia

Died November 6, 1893 — St. Petersburg, Russia

Symphony No. 6, Op. 68 B minor **(Pathétique Symphony)**

Pyotr Ilych Tchaikovsky rightly sits

February Program Notes

on the pedestal of our most beloved composers, most certainly those of the latter half of the 19th century. His music is legendary, not only for seeing countless performances in concert halls, but for appearing regularly in everyday life via movies, television shows, commercials, and holiday events. To many, Tchaikovsky's music is instantly recognizable, whether you know the man behind it or not.

Not unlike his music, Tchaikovsky's personal story is riveting. Being somewhat of a late bloomer, he began his higher education in music whilst already in his twenties, although quickly advanced to become a faculty member at the Moscow Conservatory of Music. Perhaps the busiest year of his life would be 1877 when he would complete the first of his three legendary ballets: *Swan Lake*; marry a former student; and begin his famous correspondence with Nadezhda von Meck, the mysterious patron whom he would never meet.

In hopes of dousing public suspicions in regards to his homosexuality, Tchaikovsky married Antonina Miliukova, a former student of his from the Moscow Conservatory. Although the marriage would legally remain intact until Tchaikovsky's death in 1893, Miliukova and Tchaikovsky would separate less than two months after taking their vows. Their break-up would be initiated by Tchaikovsky who had no sincere romantic interest in Miliukova. She, on the other hand, was deeply infatuated with her husband and was devastated by the exposed falsehood behind their relationship.

That same year, Tchaikovsky would secure the most critical patron of his career. Nadezhda von Meck would pay Tchaikovsky an exuberant salary which would fund the vast majority of the composer's work over the next 15 years. A few pieces were even discreetly dedicated to von Meck (*Symphony No. 4*, for example). The legendary twist behind this correspondence is that Tchaikovsky and Von Meck would never meet in person per an agreement between the two of them. Although this idea most certainly arose from von Meck, her exact reasons behind the decision may never be known ... whether be it a fear for what Tchaikovsky's close friendship may bring, or insecurities about her own persona.

A complex personal and professional life did not help Tchaikovsky's notorious struggles with his mental health. Severe anxiety and depression would haunt Tchaikovsky until his death, and insecurity would prevent him from appreciating his own work. He was not satisfied with any of his compositions upon their completion — a great irony, given that he is one of the most popular romantic composers being programmed today.

A fine portrait of both Tchaikovsky the brilliant musician *and* the tragic persona is *Symphony No. 6 in B Minor, Op. 74*. Written the same year as the composer's death, *Symphony No. 6* would be the final publication from Tchaikovsky while he was still alive. The composer's additional opuses would all be published posthumously.

Symphony No. 6, which would become known as the *Pathétique Symphony*, is special and unique on several

February Program Notes

accounts. It contains a vastly different style and language when compared to its composer's other symphonic works, particularly the symphonies. It would also see a performance conducted by Tchaikovsky himself that would fall only days before the composer's death.

Tchaikovsky's symphonies are famous for their bombardments of raging sounds and over-the-top emotions. Their full-on aural assaults seem more fitting for Italian operas than symphonic works, but nonetheless they are easily some of the most intense 19th century examples of the genre. Not the *Pathétique Symphony*, however. *Symphony No. 6* takes a different route, one of walloping grief and mature emotional expression that is far gentler in its delivery (yet still profound). Although the *Pathétique Symphony* certainly has its moments

of intensity, it is as if a different hand is writing down the notes, dictating to the audience about a tragedy that has fallen upon a close colleague or friend. This is profound when realizing the work was premiered only nine days before Tchaikovsky's demise and can be considered a farewell message, a final musical statement expressing all that is grievous and difficult within a single human life.

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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April Guest Artist



GUOBI MALCOM LIU, Piano

Guobi Malcom Liu studies piano with artist-in-residence Prof. Vladimir Viardo at the University of North Texas. Honors include First Place and Grand Prize of the University of North Texas 2022-2023 Concerto Competition and a concert engagement with El Paso Symphony in 2023-2024 season; Silver Prize in the 2022 Young Texas Artists Music Competition; and First Place in the 2019 Conero International Piano Competition and a concert tour in the U.S., China and Italy as Conero Artist.

Teachers he has worked with in a masterclass setting include Alexander Braginsky, Cristiano Burato, Boaz Sharon, Boris Slutsky, Tamás Ungár, Jack Winerock, Zhe Tang.

Malcolm began studying piano at age 6 and began to study professionally with Ling Gao at age 9. At age 12 he was admitted to the Affiliated Middle School of Sichuan Conservatory of Music (China) with the first-place score. He studied with Dr. Chenggang Yang, graduated as the first-place student, and acquired his high school diploma there. He was then awarded a substantial scholarship and invited to attend the School of Music at the University of Kansas (KU) and earned his Bachelor of Music degree in 2019.

He was also offered substantial scholarships and admitted by KU School of Music, Mannes School of Music, and Peabody Institute for graduate studies. As a graduate teaching assistant, he pursued his Master of Music degree at KU on a full scholarship. During his study at KU, he studied with piano pedagogue Dr. Scott McBride Smith and American pianist Dr. Eric Zuber. He was nominated and selected many times to perform in the KU School of Music honor recitals and held a joint recital with vocalist Jane Trembly in 2019, his senior recital in 2019, a livestreamed recital in 2020, and Masters recitals (a solo piano recital and concerto recital) in 2021.

He also has been awarded scholarships from Sigma Alpha Iota and Kansas City Musical Club and performs frequently in their annual winner recitals. Now on a full scholarship, he is pursuing his graduate artist certificate as a teaching fellow at the University of North Texas.

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April Program

Friday, April 19, 2024
Saturday, April 20, 2024
7:30 p.m., Plaza Theatre

BOHUSLAV RATTAY, Conductor
MALCOLM LIU, Piano

DEBUSSY

Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun

PROKOFIEV

Piano Concerto No. 3, op. 26, C major
Andante – Allegro
Andantino
Allegro ma non troppo

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RACHMANINOFF

The Isle of the Dead, op. 29

GERSHWIN

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April Program Notes

Claude Debussy

Born August 22, 1862 – Saint-Fermain-en-Laye, France

Died March 25, 1918 – Paris, France

Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun

Prelude a l'après-midi d'un faune ("Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun"), *Trois Nocturnes* ("Three Nocturnes"), and *La mer* (The Sea) were Claude Debussy's only compositions originally scored for orchestra. While the composer's clear preference was writing for the piano, luckily for us Debussy took his orchestral endeavors with the utmost seriousness.

The first in the set, *Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun* is perhaps the most effortful, showing all angles of what Debussy was truly capable of at the time. Although at only 10 minutes long, the work is far more rhythmically and harmonically complex than the composer's other orchestral compositions and showcases Debussy at the height of his "impressionist" state.

There is often a common confusion in regards to the piece's subject matter, particularly the word "faun." It is easy to assume that Debussy is painting a musical picture of a baby deer, or "fawn," perusing around the woods on a lovely spring afternoon. However, the devil lies in the details, in this case, the spelling.

The "faun" here is from mythology — the half-goat, half-human creature. Debussy's piece depicts a particular faun from a poem of the same name, *L'après-midi d'un faune*, by Stéphane Mallarmé. The poem's subject matter is rather sensual in nature being the central character (the faun) in concomitant with nymphs.

Debussy's objective with his composition was not to create an original image or setting, but to simply set Mallarmé's poem to music. It was a miraculous achievement that paved the way for early modernism, but also was fully-palatable and stunningly beautiful — a combination of traits that would soon be hard to come by.

Sergie Prokofiev

Born April 23, 1891 – Sontsivka, Ukraine

Died March 5, 1953 – Moscow, Russia

Piano Concerto No. 3, Op. 26 C Major

By the end of the 19th century, music was at war with itself about its own future. On one end were the romantics, passionate about continuing the harmonic language of Beethoven and his generations of successors. The other corner was occupied by modernists who were hell-bent on redefining the standards of what current music should sound like. In the end, neither side would prevail over the other as both would contribute numerous champions throughout the entire first half of the twentieth century.

One of the most aggressive proponents of modernism (at least early on) was Sergei Prokofiev, whose unique compositions would not only inspire an entire generation of twentieth century composers, but also help establish a national sound for the Soviet Union. Prokofiev would be defiant of tradition from a young age, frustrating his early teachers with his unwillingness to abide by compositional guidelines and norms that had been in practice for centuries. His early works were shocking, bold, and clear in their message that their creator was afraid of nothing.

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However, Prokofiev would tone down his ultra-modernist approach as his life and career progressed, leaving before his death a catalogue filled with a beautiful blend of new sounds combined with those of the more traditional, leading to a splendidly unique sonic signature.

To explore this, you could not make a better choice than *Piano Concerto No. 3 in C Major, Op. 26*. Completed in 1921, it falls right in the middle of both Prokofiev's piano concerto output and his music career in general. Today it is one of Prokofiev's most popular works and contains not only the excitement and joy of a classical-era concerto, but an eeriness that had not yet been experienced in any music.

If you are partial to the "in-between," Prokofiev can easily become one of your favorite composers. There have been few musicians in history capable of offering such a diverse body of work.

Sergie Rachmaninoff

Born April 1, 1873 – Starorussky, Uyezd, Russia

Died March 28, 1943 – Beverly Hills, CA

Isle of the Dead, Op. 29

Art of any kind is enjoyed because of how it enriches our lives — creating it is a form of self-expression through a medium other than speech, which makes progressing through life a fascinating experience. While we are moved by art that is beautiful whether it be a painting that takes our breath away or a piece of music that brings us to tears, art can be equally unsettling ... bringing us thoughts and emotions of the dark and the cold.

In 1880 the Swiss painter Arnold Böcklin began work on a set of paintings that would define his career. The paintings are five versions of the same setting which Böcklin deemed *Isle of the Dead*. Today these paintings can be found at various galleries around the world: Basel, New York, Leipzig, and Berlin all house a version of the painting.

Isle of the Dead depicts two figures in a rowboat traveling towards a small island, clad in stone and tall trees. The painting is unsettling for two reasons: One, the island is desolate with no other human figures visible. It is also inferred that there is much more to the island than meets the eye, kept hidden by the dark shadows cast by the trees. Two, there is a tall figure standing at the front of the approaching rowboat. This figure is facing towards the island (away from the viewer) and is dressed in a white robe. The subject matter of this painting is rather obvious: A resident being delivered to their new home.

Overall, the work is breathtaking, particularly when you take the time to view all five versions (all completed by Böcklin himself). They vary in their depictions of the unsettling traits mentioned earlier: The island itself and the white-robed figure. Each version affects its viewers in a slightly different fashion, making these paintings a symbolist work of genius and one of the most popular painting projects throughout the early 20th century.

Meanwhile, the Russian composer and pianist Sergei Rachmaninoff viewed Böcklin's *Isle of the Dead* for the first time, more specifically a photograph of the painting's fourth version. Rachmaninoff

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had been searching for a subject in which to base a tone poem, and his viewing experience of *Isle of the Dead* had passed the test.

For a 20-minute orchestral work, Rachmaninoff completed the piece in a relatively short amount of time — it was premiered in the spring of 1909. Naturally, the music is far more vague than the painting, with many sounds and passages open for interpretation. For a setting as simple as this painting, Rachmaninoff's *Isle of the Dead, Op. 29* has much to say and it is up to you, the listener and viewer, to ultimately translate."

George Gershwin

Born September 26, 1898 – Brooklyn, New York, NY

Died July 11, 1937 – Los Angeles, CA

An American in Paris

By the end of the 19th century, the United States was desperately trying to expand its possibilities for a "national sound." Being somewhat of an infant in regards to a free and independent state, the U.S. was well behind in the art music scene, which had been dominated by Europe for centuries. To be clear, music has existed in the Americas for as long as people have resided here, stretching back thousands of years before colonization. However, the U.S. made it clear that it wished to follow in Europe's footsteps when it opened its first music school, the Boston Academy of Music, in 1883 and performed Beethoven's *Symphony No. 1* in its first concert.

Roughly 15 years later, composers such as John Philip Sousa and Scott Joplin were

making serious headway at defining a new American sound, with military band marches and ragtime piano music still remaining hugely popular to this day. However, when jazz began to appear in 1917 and America branched off towards its own ingenious and original genres, there are still American composers interested in pursuing art music, and they are tackling it more effectively than ever before.

George Gershwin is one of the finest examples from the early 20th century to pursue this idea. Although he would only live to the age of 38, due to brain cancer, his works cemented him as a champion who truly made classical music sound "American."

An American in Paris was completed in 1928 during Gershwin's most notable decade. The '20s also saw Gershwin's iconic *Rhapsody in Blue* and the hit songs *I've got Rhythm*, *Fascinating Rhythm*, and *Embraceable You*. These definitive classics would symbolize Gershwin as the composer of the "roaring Twenties" and forever remind us of the eclectic excess of America's most exciting decade.

An American in Paris is a tone poem inspired by Gershwin's trip to France in 1926. It is a soundscape based on the noises heard on the busy Parisian streets — clear impressions of happy pedestrians walking and traffic frantically navigating the morning commute define the pleasant atmosphere of the music. The work even calls for "car horn," a scoring decision inspired by the debut performance of the piece that featured authentic Parisian car horns that Gershwin brought back with him to the United States.

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Gershwin tragically met the pattern set by numerous great composers — the gift of incredible music at the price of a short life. Thankfully Gershwin will never be forgotten, particularly because he helped us understand how effectively music can be made to sound “American.”

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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FRIENDS OF EPSO

Every year the El Paso Symphony Orchestra offers over 40,000 area students the experience of live symphonic music. Every year the El Paso Symphony Orchestra brings the joy of music to over 2,000 senior citizens.

Every time you write a check, it helps.

The El Paso Symphony Orchestra's Outreach and Educational programs are a direct result of the financial support that is contributed by FRIENDS OF EPSO. These annual gifts help the EPSO to present concerts and music education and outreach programs to a broad range of audiences throughout the community.

Become a FRIEND OF EPSO today with a generous contribution. A simple gift can bring the music to life and ensure that EPSO continues its legacy of performing the finest orchestra music. Call (915) 532-3776 to become a **FRIEND OF EPSO**.

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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