



Williamsport Symphony Orchestra

GERARDO EDELSTEIN, MUSIC DIRECTOR/CONDUCTOR

unplugged.

Season 2014-2015

Williamsport Symphony Orchestra E-Notes

May 2015

2014-2015 Calendar

May 2015

03 WSYO Chamber Recital
Mary Welch Honors Hall
Lycoming College
4:00 pm

11 Meet the Maestro
Happy Hour
Capitol Lounge, CAC
5:30-7:00 pm

12 WSO *Hope & Triumph*
Community Arts Center
7:30 pm

For more information, please visit
www.williamsportsymphony.org



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Alexander**

Conductor's Corner

Dear Friends,

Dimitri Shostakovich is without doubt one of the greatest composers of the twentieth century. He had a very difficult life in Russia under the Soviet regime. Shostakovich's music was rejected in the beginning mainly for not following the ideals of socialist realism. An



adequate portrayal of socialist realism in music meant an exalted rhetoric based on optimism. Shostakovich's music was considered too complex and too dissonant, and he and was forced to change direction. After a disastrous review of his opera *Lady MacBeth*, Shostakovich at the edge of a breakdown started to compose his *Symphony No. 5*. The piece met all of the regime's requests and became immediately a huge success. We can find in it lyricism, grandeur, clarity and wit although the ones close to the composer could sense the hidden message of protest and sarcasm. We can hear in this symphony the struggle of a man who believed in art and managed to express himself in so many ways despite the limitations that were imposed on him.

One of the most beautiful concertos for Piano and Orchestra in the repertoire came from the hands of Robert Schumann. This is his only completed piano concerto and was premiered by his wife Clara. It was she who encouraged Robert to finish the piece that was conceived as a *Phantasie* by adding an intermezzo and finale. It made a huge impact on other young composers including Grieg and Rachmaninov. The piece is full of ravishing melodies, piano virtuosity and orchestral colors. Our soloist is the internationally

renowned pianist, Jorge F. Osorio whom I had the chance to hear a few years ago with the Chicago Symphony in the same concerto! I was impressed with his musicality, finesse and power and I am looking forward to our collaboration with him!

This last concert of the season starts with a delicate and profound piece by American composer John Corigliano. Dedicated to Samuel Barber, this neo-romantic piece was based on his music for an off- Broadway production of Wallace Frey's *Helen*. I hope you enjoy the concert!

Fondly, Gerardo Edelstein



Gerardo Edelstein
Music Director/Conductor

New feature - **History Lessons**



WSO 1950-1951

One hundred years! That's when "it" started, the "it" being the Williamsport symphony Orchestra. However, 'twas not 100 successive years -beginning with the 1915 concert conducted by E. Hart Bugbee; therefore, no centennial celebration. However, the Golden Anniversary will be celebrated during the 2016-17 season. There is much orchestra history to report and so the "History Lessons" begin with this newsletter and continue through the Golden celebration year.

For starters: E. Hart Bugbee's orchestra of 1915 performed until 1922 when it disbanded. As with much of history, the orchestra's proper name could be the Williamsport Civic Orchestra or the Williamsport Symphony; both names appear in the files. Anyone know - unequivocally - which name is correct?

That 1922 ending became a beginning (isn't that always the way; one door closes, another opens?); with the Great Depression came a variety of government sponsored programs including the Rural Works Development that became the Works Progress Administration (WPA). Bugbee coordinated the Rural Works Development Orchestra which was conducted by violinist Charles Young. Bugbee returned to the podium as conductor a few years thereafter with Osborne Housel

as concertmaster until 1936. Thereafter, Bugbee directed the Milton Symphony which included many Williamsport musicians; one was violinist Earl Williams, who contributed to this history lesson.

Read on through upcoming newsletters to get more of the "scoop" on the 100 years. And for those with long memories who choose to contribute information, please contact the office staff who will forward the information to the "history mavens" responsible for getting-it-right.

Program Notes by Dr. Gary Boerckel

"Are you, too, musical?"

During his lifetime, Robert Schumann never enjoyed the fame of his young wife, Clara. In an age of great pianists, Clara joined the front ranks of touring virtuosos when she was still in her teens. She was one of the first pianists to perform from memory and one of the first to champion the music of Chopin. Clara's only teacher was her father, Friedrich Wieck, and her success led to his. Robert Schumann-nine years older than Clara-began to study with Wieck after hearing his daughter on the piano. At first, Schumann took a brotherly interest in Clara, but after several years the two found themselves in love. Wieck believed that Clara was throwing herself away and did his best to keep them apart. Robert and Clara were married as soon as she was old enough to marry without her father's consent, and Clara devoted herself completely to her marriage and Robert's career-even though she paid a price. When Robert was composing, which was most of the time, Clara could not practice. And then there were the children-eventually eight of them! Despite everything, Clara was able to continue performing. Schumann's music was not immediately understood. Royalties were meager and Clara's concerts were their main source of income. Naturally Clara performed her husband's works whenever possible and, after Robert's death, she conquered Europe with the piano concerto he had written for her. But that was the future! In St. Petersburg, a Russian nobleman was gushing praise for Clara after one her concerts. Clara introduced her husband and the aristocrat turned to Robert and asked: "Are you, too, musical?"



"A Soviet artist's practical, creative response to just criticism"

Dmitri Shostakovich achieved the impossible with his fifth symphony: he created a work that placated the hidebound Soviet authorities, transported the Russian public, and the fifth is now one of the best loved of all his compositions. For more than a decade, Shostakovich had been the golden boy of Russian music. His first symphony, written when he was eighteen and still a conservatory student, was a tremendous success at home and abroad. Musicians admired him, audiences packed concert halls to hear his music, and governmental officials were proud of the achievements of a loyal, young communist. That

was in 1925. Over the next 10 years, Joseph Stalin quietly and inexorably gained absolute control of the Soviet government. But the prudish, paranoid dictator wanted to rule his empire's cultural life as well. In 1934, "socialist realism" became the official standard by which all artists in the Soviet Union were judged. Abstruse techniques such as cubism, atonality, and stream of consciousness were condemned along with erotic or religious content. A year later, articles appeared in the Communist Party newspaper condemning some of Shostakovich's recent compositions. The composer was terrified. People who opposed the government were being tried as traitors-others simply disappeared. In 1937, Shostakovich emerged from a year of "soul-searching" with a new symphony-the Symphony No. 5-that he described to a reporter as "a Soviet artist's practical, creative response to just criticism." The audience at the first performance wept and cheered for a half hour. The government announced that Shostakovich's optimistic new symphony had restored him to favor. After Shostakovich's death, a Russian acquaintance of the composer published *Testimony*, purportedly revealing Shostakovich's honest views and opinions. In it, Shostakovich tells the reader that the famous "optimistic" conclusion of the fifth symphony is really something quite different. *"The rejoicing is forced, created under threat... It's as if someone were beating you with a stick and saying, "Your business is rejoicing, your business is rejoicing," and you rise, shaky, and go marching off, muttering, "Our business is rejoicing, our business is rejoicing."*

UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL

The Junior Strings and its Conductor

As noted in a February *Sun-Gazette* issue, the WSO "has developed youth programs to cultivate new talent." Along with the WSYO (featured in the February newsletter), is the Williamsport Symphony Junior Strings (WSJS). It aims to provide an ensemble experience for young string players from across the region; its members are in grades four to eight and come from Selinsgrove, Montgomery, Loyalsock, and Williamsport school districts in addition to home-schooled members. Now in its third year, this addition to the local music spectrum came through the generous support of Marshall and Mary Welch.

This season's 29 members performed in Clarke Chapel in November; then joined the WSYO in the CAC for a February joint performance. Michael Fisher was this season's concertmaster. Members also provide lobby entertainment for WSO concert-goers. Each year, the young musicians are invited to audition for the WSYO; in this current season two WSJS players made that move.



WSJS Conductor Matthew Radspinner

The Williamsport classical music scene has what might be called "dynasties"-the names McIver, Stahel, and Thayer, for example, come to mind. So does the name Radspinner. The influences go beyond music-making to education and leadership and extend into the third

generation.

Radspinner's grandfather chaired the WSO Board in 1979; as his grandson points out, his grandparents were season subscribers who introduced him to the WSO: "at age 10, I remember putting on my one and only white shirt, tie and green (yes, green) blazer." Grandfather - Dr. John Radspinner, was an academic - a member of Lycoming College's chemistry department and - as his grandson recalls: "an amateur violinist and tenor, but a professional supporter of the arts." Grandmother Helen was a long-standing member of the Williamsport Music Club and was a pianist/organist who taught piano for over 40 years. Among her pupils were the four children whose father, Gary Boerckel, recalls her "firm but gentle approach" teaching style. In the next generation, John, Jr. was a guitarist. He was the lead guitarist for Prince Charles and the Royaltones, a 1960s band that achieved success on the east coast.

Following in grandparents' and father's footsteps, the young Radspinner studied piano and double bass; in high school, he borrowed full orchestral scores from Walter Straiton. "I would listen, analyze, and conduct all of the masterworks from the comfort of my Hepburn Street bedroom." So began the training as conductor.

And he also followed in the teaching footsteps: an educator, on faculty in the Williamsport Area School District since 2005, he became Orchestra Director at the high school in 2011, where he directs the three curricular orchestras, the Millionaire Strolling Strings and the string quartets. He has led school district orchestras to PMEA State Conventions - a by-invitation opportunity, beginning in 2008 and shepherded the Strolling Strings to performances throughout the state and at the governor's mansion.

In addition, he has taught at Susquehanna University, Ohio State University's String Teacher Workshop, and Bucknell University. He has also been invited to guest conduct orchestras, among them the PMEA District 9 Stringfest in Scranton and the Dauphin County High School Honors Orchestra in Harrisburg. Recognition as the Outstanding Young String Teacher in 2009 by the Pennsylvania/Delaware String Teachers Association is testimony to his commitment and expertise.

Performing on the double bass, Radspinner has appeared with the Williamsport, Nittany Valley and Altoona Symphony Orchestras as well as with the Penns Woods Festival Orchestra and the Hershey Pops Orchestras. He is also a member of the Williamsport City Jazz Orchestra. Add family time -with his wife Anna, also a string teacher in the school district, parenting two daughters - and an even clearer picture of Radspinner's busy-ness emerges.

Radspinner's academic preparation includes time at the Pennsylvania State University and Mansfield University and Shenandoah Conservatory where he has completed graduate work. The "informal" education came through working with jazz greats Dennis DiBlasio, Michael Davis, Phil Matson, Peter Eldridge and others.

Thus, Williamsport continues to draw upon the talents and commitment of the Radspinners, now through three generations: on stage, in classrooms, and in studios.

A Tribute to Dr. Marshall Welch

In 2004, Dr. Marshall Welch launched the Williamsport Symphony Endowment campaign with an exceedingly generous contribution. His example encouraged other donors and the campaign resulted

in commitments of more than one million dollars. His one request was that his wife Mary's name be attached to any pops concert or pops program. You'll notice, therefore, that for any summer Pops in the Park or pops concert in a regular season, the concert is dedicated to Mary Welch.

Around 2007, Dr. Gary Boerckel wanted to develop an Academy program to teach and train young musicians. Dr. and Mrs. Welch's donation supported the WSO Academy for two years at which time they approved transferring the balance of funds for a two year pilot program called the WSJS - Williamsport Symphony Junior Strings. Currently in its third year, the WSJS has become a strong beginning orchestra experience for elementary and middle school musicians from around the area.

When I asked Mary where her husband's interest in music originated, she quickly answered it was because she enjoyed it. She added that when Rick Coulter moved into their neighborhood, Rick and Marshall talked a lot about music - particularly pops and brass. And perhaps because of that, in the last 10 years Marshall enjoyed coming to the outdoor music programs, especially concerts at the Brandon Bandshell, and he also became a regular listener to streamed classical music at home.

In August of last year, the Williamsport community and the WSO lost a stalwart supporter of the arts, education, and culture. We acknowledge with gratitude both Marshall and Mary's belief and support of this Symphony and its programs.



Fan Mail

From the March Concert: comments from around the region

The March concert included several "newcomers" to the audience, representing the regional appeal of the orchestra.

From Lock Haven and Avis, from the Community Services Group came first-time visitors to both the CAC and the WSO. Hearing "live music" was the attraction, and they found both the experience and the venue thrilling.

And from Shamokin dam:

Just a note to express our appreciation for the opportunity you gave us to attend the symphony concert on Saturday evening....and a WONDERFUL concert it was, truly enjoyable. Thank you so much for the tickets and for your efforts in getting them to us. It was a night we will long remember and appreciate.

And Montgomery:

P.S. The horn section especially impressed us.

The "you" referenced above is Valerie Whyman, a member of the horn section. She

explained that its author had heard the Billtown Brass this past summer when the group performed in Milton and expressed interest in hearing the symphony orchestra.

Local Fan Mail

From the February concert came this comment from nine years old Leah Banzhaf, who is a beginner violin student:

I am so excited; I kept my ticket and I'm going to ask for her [violin teacher, Danielle Fassnacht] autograph. Leah's grandmother, who brought her to the concert, noted that throughout the performance, Leah's fingers kept moving with the music.

From the March concert:

MAGNIFICENT CONCERT! The rhythms and tunes are still ringing in my head and heart. You all keep getting better and better. Can hardly wait for the next concert. See you there.

GB

And a note to trumpeter Dale Orris: *You were wonderful Saturday night. Your "voice" in the WSO is dependably a joy...always right on the money...always an example of the best of what's called for! We are so grateful you fill the principal chair.* DP

And an email to Becky Ciabattari: *Just a note to let you know how much we enjoyed the concert last Saturday. Your solos were awesome.* BV

From the Desk of the ED - Janet Harris

Each time someone refers to the Symphony as a "gem" in our community, we are very proud. Our pride also includes living in an area that values and sustains a professional caliber symphony. From our perspective, we can appreciate the work which goes into getting the musicians on the stage, and more importantly, keeping them there. We are blessed with a passionate music director, staff, board, and volunteers, particularly the *Friends of the Symphony* who have given their time and energy over the years.



We're pleased that our ticket prices have been kept low because we want you and your family to enjoy your orchestra. Our ticket revenue provides less 30% of our income, and the remainder of our support comes through the generosity of contributors, devotion of our volunteers, and organizations which have provided grants towards our programs, particularly those for children and youth. To illustrate how important our sponsors and contributors are to the longevity and success of the symphony, a donation of \$500 covers

the cost of one musician to play in one concert. We have five concerts in our season series. If we need to rent music from a publisher for a concert, it can cost more than \$1,000. There are many ways to support these goals.

This summer we're excited that the Williamsport Symphony will perform a free, family Pops in the Park concert at the Brandon Park band shell! Bring your chairs and blankets on Saturday, August 22 at 7:00 pm and enjoy the entertainment under the stars. Also, two more free concerts will be performed, both by the WSO Billtown Brass in Brandon Park on Sunday, August 16 and Central Oak Heights on Saturday, August 15. The concerts start at 7:00pm.

Recently, there was a posting on Facebook which showed Charlie Brown's dog Snoopy dancing. Schroeder is next to him playing his little grand piano and the caption says "Happiness Is Music". I hope you agree.

Let the music play on!



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