During a six-day period in late September 2019, two remarkable public events will occur in the mid-Atlantic area. Audiences at each event will witness highly skilled and talented professionals who have developed their abilities over years of experience. Performing extraordinarily, they will be doing things that only a very small percentage of the American population could ever hope to be able to do, even once.

Tickets must be purchased to witness these remarkable events. Individual ticket prices for one of them vary from $125 to $1,000, although no tickets are now available — the event is already sold out. Ticket prices to attend the other event are far, far lower in price, and tickets are still available. Each event will occur on a single day and each event will take about the same time to complete. One event will feature particular skills and abilities first developed during the 20th century — the other one, skills and abilities developed since the 17th century. One event will produce for its owners, on that single day, gross revenue in excess of $9,000,000. The other one will not even begin to pay for itself.

Surely you have guessed by now that the two events in question are, on September 22, a football game at Lincoln Financial Field between the Philadelphia Eagles and the Detroit Lions, and on September 27, the opening concert of the 114th season of the Delaware Symphony Orchestra.

As we begin the new DSO season, we remain very grateful for all of our donors, and season ticket holders, who make it possible for us to bring classical symphonic music to Delaware. There are some who do not understand the business model of our, or any other, regional symphony orchestra in the country. Ticket sales do not begin to cover the cost of the concerts. Different factors — the number of concerts we can afford to present, the size of the theater available to us and the costs to use it, community pricing standards, the reality that presenting first-class concerts requires first-class professional musicians and an outstanding conductor — mean that the DSO can expect ticket sales to cover only about 20% of the total cost of each full-orchestra concert. Couldn’t we cover the complete cost of a full orchestra concert through ticket sales alone? Of course we could — if we could successfully charge around $125 for each ticket (which happens to be the lowest ticket price of a seat at that Eagles game). But we cannot and should not, because we want as many Delawareans as possible to be able to enjoy the Delaware Symphony.

Many things remain the same in the symphonic world. In the fall 2015 issue of this newsletter, Clef Notes, I wrote that “When you see the DSO on stage, you’re seeing accomplished graduates of the great music schools, people who, through countless hours of lessons and practice sessions have continually pursued the highest levels of the art.” That hasn’t changed, thank goodness. In the Fall 2016 issue, I wrote that “it remains stubbornly true that nothing really compares to live orchestra performances, and this is exactly what we offer,” and that “We are and remain grateful to the sophisticated donors, large and small, who value classical music and who demonstrate their faith in the century-old Delaware Symphony and its future....in America, no orchestra can reasonably hope that more than a small percentage of its budget will be provided from governmental sources.” Nothing has changed in any of that.

As always, we invite you to be part of this. Come to our concerts and donate to the DSO at the highest level you can. Celebrate the incomparable local treasure that is the Delaware Symphony Orchestra.
September is one of my favorite months of the year. It’s when I get to admire the upcoming season—whole, untouched, and ripe. Last season’s glow slowly fades over summer, allowing the next season to come into focus as one big event—a large-scale, multi-month drama. That perspective begins to evaporate one show at a time once the season is underway. It is the only time of year when I can stand back and enjoy the “big picture” result of many hours of puzzling over repertoire, budgets, tastes, and logistics.

I love programming, partly for the deep dive into great repertoire it requires, and partly for the downhill slalom of carefully (and often quickly) maneuvering through and around obstacles like budget limitations and scheduling conflicts.

Everything begins, of course, with that repertoire, which is wonderfully rich and vast. Some works find their way onto our seasons more frequently than some others which might be passed over not for their own weakness, but rather because of the abundance of choice and dearth of opportunity. Sometimes we (literally!) have to play favorites. And every year, we invariably leave some pieces behind for another year and bring others, overlooked in the past, into the limelight they deserve.

This season strikes a particularly gratifying balance. We begin with Dvořák’s sunny eighth symphony, with its melodic abundance and general cheeriness. It dips its musical toe in the water of progressiveness, but never takes the plunge. And we end with Beethoven’s ninth—a work which dives headlong into uncharted waters and forever changed the course of the symphony.

In between are two underplayed masterpieces, Rachmaninoff’s first symphony, and Nielsen’s fifth—works which push both emotional and formal boundaries—and Holst’s most popular work The Planets which was, in spite of its name, written as an astrological tribute rather than an astronomical one. It would go on to serve as a template for many Hollywood-bound composers wanting to write spectacularly colorful and evocative music.

This quintet of masterpieces is flanked on all sides by extraordinary concertos by Mozart, Beethoven, Elgar, and Barber—played by brilliant soloists Anthony McGill, Camille Thomas, Tessa Lark, and Michael Brown; and by openers from Missy Mazzoli, Ravel, Borodin, and Weber.

Our Chamber Series at the Hotel duPont is wide-ranging. Everything from tango master Astor Piazzolla’s Four Seasons to the octets of Mendelssohn and Schubert, and music of Brahms, Jennifer Higdon, Joan Tower, Caroline Shaw, Aaron Jay Kernis, Fanny Mendelssohn, and Clara Schumann.

It is deeply gratifying to know that the Delaware Symphony is able to bring such high quality, diverse programs played by wonderful musicians to our community. It is a testament to you that our small city and state, can enjoy amenities like world-class classical music in our own back yard.

As September moves to October, and on into the season, the full, pristine, panorama of 2019-2020 is replaced one piece at a time by memories and emotions. By May, they will coalesce into a white-hot after-image whose momentum carries us through the summer—until the next fall, when we hungrily look with anticipation at what’s next. It is the joyful respiration of the DSO. Thanks for breathing the music with us.

JOIN US IN WELCOMING JEONGMIN LEE TO THE DSO

Jeongmin Lee began studying violin at the age of four in South Korea. After just a few years, she knew that she wanted to become a professional violinist. Lee began studying with Young Uck Kim at the Seoul National University and a few years later, decided to continue her studies at Peabody Institute with Professor Victor Danchenko, where she earned her Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees in Violin Performance. The following year, Lee received her Artist Diploma from The Royal Conservatory of Music. In addition, she has also had the opportunity to work with other prominent violinists, include Shlomo Mintz, Zakhar Bron, Miriam Fried, Tamara Smirnova, Aaron Rosand, and Ida Kavafian.

Playing in a professional orchestra has always been Lee’s greatest passion. When she auditioned for the DSO and was offered the position of assistant concertmaster, she was delighted!

In her spare time, she enjoys watching some favorite TV shows, exercising, and trying new restaurants and cafes in Baltimore where she is currently living. She is an avid reader and especially enjoys biographies and books about inspiring life stories.

FROM THE PODIUM

Photo: Joe del Tufo, Moonloop Photography

David Amado
Music Director

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Doing the Right Thing

During the June 2018 annual conference of the League of American Orchestras, I was sitting in a constituency meeting of like-sized orchestra managers right after lunch. The League’s president was talking about Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI). He related the stories of two orchestras, including one about a questionable audition process conducted by the Delaware Symphony Orchestra. My ears perked up quickly from my food semi-coma. Upon my return home, I started investigating this matter further, asking staff and musicians about their memories of the events. Eventually, I sought out the auditionee—a person of color—to get their side of the story. Since the incident occurred more than a decade ago, recollections could be discounted some, but I was able to piece together enough information that I could build a reasonable accounting and identify factual mistakes in the storyline and conclusions, erroneously drawn, based on those mistakes.

My conversation with the auditionee was long. It went well beyond talking about “the incident,” and led me to deeper thinking about these timely and critical issues with terms that were new to me, like implicit racism, implicit bias, white privilege, and white fragility. A couple months later, I attended a half-day workshop, “Undoing Racism,” in Philadelphia that revealed even more blindness by me to this issue. Later, I learned the auditionee suggested I be invited. Here I am, a 57-year old white male raised in South Jersey and the level of my naiveté on this topic was embarrassing, jarring, and alarming. There’s an old saying about walking a mile in another person’s shoes to really find out how they live; well, I felt like I needed those shoes for a hundred miles!

The League is leading the charge on this issue in our industry, and I’m increasingly becoming a convert to the cause. No one argues the claim that American orchestras are not diverse—in the audiences, on stages, in offices, and in the board rooms. We are predominantly playing music by dead, white, European composers—many of whom lived in a monarchical society—on instruments that were developed centuries ago. And most of us seem to be going along without a sense of imminent threat to our organizations. So, why the urgency? Heather Noonan, the League’s Vice President for Advocacy, told me of a story a few years ago where she was in a meeting with an influential nonprofit policy leader who said something to the effect of, “Yes, I know orchestras provide great programs in schools and community centers, but who do you see in the concert hall, where the entire ensemble plays?” In other words, it’s not enough for an orchestra to offer a few outreach activities and feel it can check off the diversity box and move on. True DEI work must be prevalent and constant throughout the organization, and future public (federal, state, and local government) funding may be at risk if orchestras do not get more serious about it.

For a long time, I’ve pondered how our orchestra in Delaware could be more relevant. How could we be a better resource for the entire community? And how could we better reflect our community? The challenges are much easier to identify than the solutions: we have a small staff with limited turnover, so real DEI change in the office may take some time. Regarding orchestra members, the DSO follows the standard practice of “blind auditions,” that is, auditionees perform behind a screen so that the judges cannot know their identity (including gender, race, and age). Further, the pipeline for orchestra players—conservatories and university schools of music—have their own issues in addressing diversity. What could we do to bring more people of color into our ensemble? Diversifying the board seems to be the best place to start. Board terms at the DSO are three years and renewable. And, of course, if we work to address the three areas above, isn’t it logical that our audience will gradually be more reflective of the organization’s diverse internal components?

This year at the League of American Orchestras conference, DEI was front and center again, perhaps with even greater emphasis. During one session that included presentations from respected colleagues in Arkansas and Tennessee, the path forward to me for the DSO became a little more clear—and difficult. Starting internal conversations is awkward, hard, and the effort takes a long time. There is no quick path to DEI. Indeed, my takeaways include:

1) DEI work is never “done.” (Although, a suggested goal is when you achieve DEIB [Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging].)
2) Those involved who are not of color have to recognize their individual challenges in relating to the experiences of those of color.
3) Resistance and discomfort are natural, and forcing the process too quickly may be counterproductive. (“If conflict doesn’t arise, progress isn’t being made.”)
4) The work requires a “shared lens, shared vocabulary, shared toolkit, and shared decision-making.”

The time is right for the DSO to consider Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in every decision, action, and event that we undertake. We need to accept that this will be uncomfortable, time- and resource-consuming, frustratingly slow, and we should expect push-back. But we should do it because it is right and, in the end, will make for a stronger, more relevant, and more sustainable orchestra. And, perhaps, someday soon, there will be a great story about a DSO audition that resulted in an extraordinarily talented musician of color getting an early-career chance to perform many genres of music—including timeless classics—en route to a major career.
The Delaware Symphony Association held its Annual Meeting on Wednesday, June 17, 2019, at The Delaware Theatre Company. On that occasion, three new directors were elected to serve on the Delaware Symphony Board. Please join us in welcoming these three community members to the DSO Family. We look forward to having them share their energy, experience, and expertise with us!

Alicia Rochelle Hughes is a seasoned, dual-degreed law and science certified professional with a record of achievement in law, non-profit management, secondary and higher education, intellectual property prosecution (focused in the life sciences and pharmacology), curriculum development, advocacy (local, state and federal) and policy, and program and business development, including issue identification, strategic planning and implementation.

Alicia’s professional background encompasses positions with increasing responsibility within all three branches of the federal government as well as municipal and state governments, trade associations, law firms and academic public-private partnerships. A classically-trained pianist, she briefly served on the DSO Board previously, until work commitments required her relocation.

After many years volunteering with civic and non-profit organizations, Greg Lavelle was elected to the 11th District of the Delaware House of Representatives in 2000. He served as the House Minority Leader for the Republican Caucus from 2010-2012. Elected to the Delaware State Senate in 2012 and again in 2014, Greg served as Senate Minority Whip for the Republican Caucus. Greg’s current and past board service includes the Delaware Council on Economic Education, Fresh Start Scholarship Foundation, Inc., the Delaware Prosperity Partnership, Girls Incorporated of Delaware, and Westside Health Service. He has been with Puglisi & Associates in Newark, Delaware, since 1987 where he currently serves as a Managing Director. His major responsibilities at Puglisi & Associates are investment management and accounting for a group of the firm’s clients. Greg and his wife Ruth have two children and reside in Sharpyle.

Michael Maxwell is a partner in the Potter Anderson law firm’s Business Group. He advises clients on matters of Delaware corporate and business law in transactions involving Delaware alternative entities and corporations, including investment and private equity fund transactions, fund formations, joint ventures, cross border transactions, mergers, acquisitions, asset sales and purchases, dissolutions and restructurings. He also represents both lenders and borrowers in a variety of commercial financing transactions. Mike also advises management, boards and special committees of Delaware entities on matters of operation and governance, including with respect to fiduciary duty and contractual interpretation issues. Mike provides legal opinions on issues of Delaware law in connection with the foregoing. Mike is a founding board member of The Great Oaks Charter School – Wilmington. He lives in North Wilmington with his wife and six children.

UPCOMING CONCERTS:

CLASSICS SERIES

David Amado, conductor

Fridays at 7:30 p.m.

Copeland Hall, The Grand Opera House, Wilmington

Pre-concert talks from the stage by David Amado at 6:30 p.m.

SEPTEMBER 27, 2019

Bohemian Rhapsody

MISSY MAZZOLI: Sinfonia (for Orbiting Spheres)

- Alfred I. duPont Award winner

BARBER: Concerto for Violin, op. 14

Tessa Lark, violin

DVOŘÁK: Symphony No. 8, op. 88, B.163, G Major

NOVEMBER 15, 2019

War and Peace

RAVEL: Le Tombeau de Couperin

BEETHOVEN: Concerto for Piano No. 3, op. 37, C Minor

NIELSEN: Symphony No. 5, Op. 50

Michael Brown, piano

JANUARY 17, 2020

False Starts

BORODIN: Overture to Prince Igor

ELGAR: Cello Concerto, Op. 85, E Minor

Camille Thomas, cello

RACHMANINOFF: Symphony No. 1

MARCH 27, 2020

Spirit World

WEBER: Overture to Oberon

MOZART: Clarinet Concerto, K.622

HOLST: The Planets

Anthony McGill, clarinet

MAY 15, 2020

Fate and Hope

BRAHMS: Schicksalslied, Op. 54

(Song of Destiny)

BEETHOVEN: Symphony No. 9, Op. 125, D Minor, “Choral”

Othalie Graham, soprano;

Kirstin Chávez, alto;

Dinyar Vania, tenor;

Grant Youngblood, bass

University of Delaware Symphonic Choir, Paul Head, Director

PLUS! SUNDAY, MAY 17, 2020, 3 P.M.

Cape Henlopen High School Theatre, Lewes

David Amado talk at 2:00 p.m.

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CHAMBER SERIES

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 22, 2019

DSO Chamber Orchestra

JENNIFER HIGDON: Dance Card, I. Raucous Rumpus, III. Jumble Dance, V. Machina Rockus

ASTOR PIAZZOLA: Four Seasons

PIOTR I. TCHAIKOVSKY: Souvenir de Florence

David Amado, conductor

David Southorn, violin

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2019

Violin, Horn, and Piano

AARON JAY KERNIS: Air for violin and piano

CLARA SCHUMANN: Piano Trio

JOHANNES BRAHMS: Horn Trio

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 2020

An Evening of Strings with the Mendelssohns

FANNY MENDELSSOHN: String Quartet

CAROLINE SHAW: Entr’acte (string quartet)

FELIX MENDELSSOHN: Octet

TUESDAY, APRIL 21, 2020

Quartets plus

GIOVANNI BOTTEINI: Elegy for String Bass and String Quartet

JOAN TOWER: Red Maple for bassoon and strings

FRANZ SCHUBERT: Octet for clarinet, horn, bassoon and strings