



It Was the Best of Times; It Was the Worst of Times

The 2019–2020 season has been a year of unprecedented ups and downs both for the Elgin Symphony Orchestra and for the Elgin Symphony League. We have faced daunting challenges together and met them in amazingly innovative ways.

We were saddened when Maestro Andrew Grams announced that he would not renew his contract with ESO, but we're happy that he returns this Fall to conduct two limited capacity concerts: the first at Goebbert's Pumpkin Patch and Apple Orchard, 42W813 Reinking Rd, Pingree Grove, IL 60140, on September 11, and the second at the Haight, 166 Symphony Way, Elgin, IL 60120 on September 12.



The program includes:

- George Walker: Lyric for Strings
- Jules Massenet: Meditation from Thaïs
- Pablo de Sarasate: Zigeunerweisen, op. 20
- Franz Joseph Haydn: Symphony No. 60
"Il Distratto"

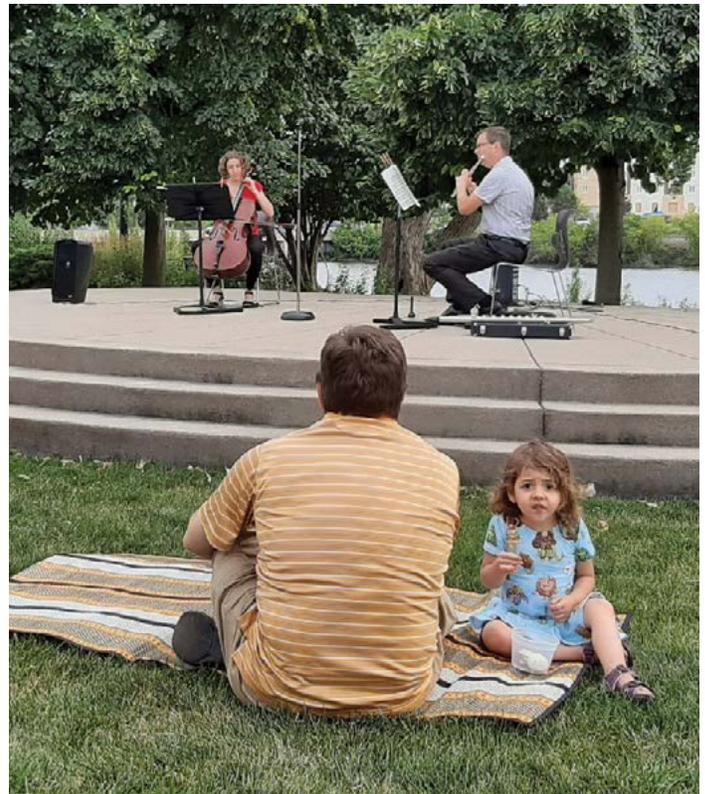
Phillippe Quint will be the guest violin soloist. At this writing, Andrew is also scheduled to return next Spring to conduct two of Richard Strauss's virtuosic tone poems, *Don Juan* and *Don Quixote*.

Hails and Farewells

We said farewell to **Marketing Director Diane Handler**, who now spends more time pursuing her own artistic passions, and to **Operations Director Mark Mallamo**, who is exploring new horizons as a commercial airline pilot. **David Conroy** transitioned over to the ESO Board of Directors. **Gwen Gage** resigned as our recording secretary and all-round institutional memory. *Thanks, Gwen, we'll miss you.*

We welcomed **Erik Malmquist**, who joined us as our new Operations Director in January 2020 and hit the ground running. He ran so fast that he became Executive Director on May 15 and has been instituting innovations ever since. Here, I'll simply list a few of the ways in which he keeps the Symphony in our minds and hearts:

- ZOOM presentations of Jim Kendros' popular *Inside the Music* programs have been available on Monday evenings at 7 P.M, keeping us informed and eager for more.



Cellist Sara Sitzer and flutist Scott Metlicka perform at Gail Borden Public Library on July 30 as Sara's daughter Talia listens.

- Through ZOOM Mingles with the Maestro, we listened to Andrew Grams chat with members of “the Band.” We saw the musicians in their homes and heard them talk frankly and informally about how the corona virus has affected them and their families, how they’ve coped, and what music they’ve been listening to. Cellist Matt Agnew has been home-schooling his 3 children; bass violinist Tim Shaffer travelled West to visit a family member who is a health care worker: during his long cross-country drive, he listened to Mozart’s Requiem, interspersed with 80s rock. We learned that the Maestro’s parrot squawks a lot; that Phillippe Quint’s wall of art is as arresting as his playing; and that Amanda Grimm’s living space has great old woodwork. To a person, the orchestra members said they miss one another. We miss them too.
- ZOOM concerts. In *An Evening with Isabella Lippi*, our concertmaster demonstrated her usual virtuosity in works from Bach, Paganini, Ysaye and George Gershwin.
- ZOOM meetings with Erik to keep us informed. I’ll notify you by email when they occur.

We welcomed **Ashley Schoen** as Marketing Director and listened to the series of podcasts she created with the staff of Gail Borden Public Library District’s Studio 270. That staff includes **Nick Stackowiak**, whose mother, Jodie, is also a perfect mum to us all. You can find Ashley’s podcasts on the ESO website when they resume in the fall. Ashley also made sure the ESO had a presence at various citywide celebrations throughout the year and at the Elgin Farmers Market. We thank the many volunteers from the Elgin Symphony League and Board of Trustees for their volunteer help in staffing the ESO tables.

David Conroy enjoys a well-deserved rest after guiding the ESO through stormy seas. Notably, David, along with Jodie and Erik, successfully secured a federal grant that allowed the ESO orchestra to pay our musicians for the canceled Debussy and Brahms

and Gustav Holtz concerts. *Symphony Reimagined*, Dave’s program for sustaining the ESO’s image and function in the Fox Valley, has guided us through these difficult times. We thank him, sincerely.



Carolyn Branch prepares the intermission buffet for the ESO musicians.

The League, too, has been working to help sustain the orchestra’s mission of providing excellent musicianship, innovative programming, and thoughtful advocacy for the communities it serves.

Carolyn Branch kept you well informed through her excellent Facebook posts. With **Diane Campbell**, Carolyn provided the Orchestra Buffet at intermissions of all the classical concerts, prompting one musician to say that the Buffet “makes ESO the best gig ever.” This year Carolyn, Diane and **Gwen Gage** also served the mariachi concert. Gwen Gage contributed empanadas, tamales, churros, and drinks: Horchata (rice drink), Tamarindo, & Jamaica (hibiscus) to the festive table.

During the 2019-20 season, *Mingle with the Musicians* relocated to the Hemmens and the Symphony

League took over hosting responsibilities. Generous donors sponsored the after-concert buffets and orchestra musicians gave informal concerts in the Hemmens lobby after classical performances. Many thanks to **Monie Burns, Diane Campbell and Sandy Horvath** who each sponsored a mingle. Our mariachi mingle was a sumptuous buffet of Latin desserts, including, of course churros. **Kevin Echeverria of Dream Hall** catered.

Ramona (Monie) Burns has joined the ESL Board as our development chair. Her job will be to seek new members and donors.

Sandy Magana, Carol Prang and their loyal band of volunteers made sure that our Boutique continued to provide great gifts at an attractive price for concertgoers. As the new season progresses, the League will sell musically themed masks at our events.

The Virtual Gala

Throughout the summer, the ESO staff worked with **Trustee (Rev.) Arlyn Tolzman and Jeanne Mingus Tolzman** on our virtual fundraising gala. Its theme, "Honor the Past, Embrace the Future," celebrated the ESO's 70th anniversary. Our Gala included an online auction with vintage wines, concert and theater tickets, museum visits, golf outings, fashion accessories, and exclusive private performance experiences featuring ESO musicians. Online bidding began on Friday, August 28 and concluded on Sunday August 30 at 3 P.M. with a live/online event showcasing conversations with favorite guest artists including **Natasha Paremski** and **William Wolfram** — as well as a brief surprise visit from the Maestro's new puppy, **Winterberry**. **Andrew Grams** and Cleveland Orchestra flutist **Saeran St. Christopher** performed a violin/flute duet just before Erik Malmquist signed off. The earnings, which exceeded expectations, will give us a good start on the 2021 season.

The Overwhelming Question

What of the 20-21 season?

I think most of my readers will remember the Hitchcock film, "The Man Who Knew Too Much," in which Doris Day sang the song *Che Sera Sera* every few minutes. Ghastly music (I admit) but an appropriate set of sentiments for us this August. The future's not ours to see. What will be will be. What will be... will be.

In the meantime, we look forward to what lies ahead: a search for a new music director, visits from many talented conductors and artists, innovative programming, and thoughtful advocacy for our diverse communities

... and planning for change.

The Virtual 5K

We are also looking forward to a virtual 5K "Run with Beethoven" to raise funds for ESO's Crescendo campaign to support the orchestra's operations and ensure its continued security and vitality during and after the Covid-19 crisis.

Registration will run from Monday, August 3rd through Friday, September 4th. You are invited to run or walk your own 5K beginning Saturday, September 5th through Saturday, September 12th.

The ESO will provide a suggested route through Elgin, or registrants may choose their own. Registrants are encouraged to post pictures or videos of themselves running the 5K under the hashtag #RunWithBeethoven. Also offered is a Beethoven playlist on Spotify, curated by Maestro

Andrew Grams, to listen to as you run, walk, or just hang out. See elginsymphony.org/eso5k for details.

All levels of participation are welcome. Registrants can track their time and compete with others in the ESO Strava club (info available on the [registration site](#)) or complete the 5K using the ESO map, create their own route, use a treadmill, or just register and collect a t-shirt.

Registration is \$40 and includes a free T-shirt. All proceeds will benefit the ESO's Crescendo Campaign. T-shirts will be mailed upon completion of the challenge.

In the Meantime...

As we wait, social media are the very best way to stay in touch with one another and find out about future events. The ESO website, beautifully designed by Leslie Wolko of Wolko Design Group, will have information about future concerts and events. Many of the summer programs are also available at the [ESO Facebook page](#), where you can listen for free! Visit the website at www.elginsymphony.org.

Elgin Symphony League will meet via ZOOM until it becomes possible to gather together as we have in the past. The [Elgin Symphony League's Facebook page](#) will keep you up to date on our own events and news, ESO announcements, and links to music to enjoy. While Carolyn Branch welcomes her new granddaughter, please send your Facebook news to me at pharkin@gmail.com.

And, most of all, please renew your membership, volunteer, and use social media!



Thank you,
Patty



Former ESL chair, Linda Schambach, at the Ainsworth Concerts for Youth, 2019.



ESL chair Patty Harkin promoting the 5K Virtual Run/Walk at the Elgin Farmers Market.