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February's Featured Composer: George Gershwin



Gershwin's symphonic poem "An American in Paris," written in 1928, was commissioned by the New York Philharmonic. While shopping for Parisian taxi horns (similar to what Harpo Marx used in movies as his "voice") to take back to the US, Gershwin was inspired to capture in music the sights and sounds of the streets of Paris. Unlike many of Gershwin's other works, this piece is not centered on the piano.

Gershwin described "An

American in Paris" in a 1928 interview in *Musical America*: "This new piece, really a rhapsodic ballet, is the most modern music I have ever attempted. The opening gay section is followed by a rich blues with a strong rhythmic undercurrent. Our American...perhaps after strolling into a café and having a couple of drinks, has succumbed to a spasm of homesickness. The harmony here is both more intense and simpler than in the preceding pages.

This blues rises to a climax, followed by a coda in which the spirit of the music returns to the vivacity and bubbling exuberance of the opening part with its impression of Paris. Apparently the homesick American, having left the café and reached the open

air, has disowned his spell of the blues and once again is an alert spectator of Parisian life. At the conclusion, the street noises and French atmosphere are triumphant." Audiences immediately loved this piece, and Hollywood definitely took note of Gershwin. 🎷

Howl It Up with the Wolf-Tones

Please join us for a benefit concert for the Wolf-Tones, the instrumental music booster group for San Ramon Valley High School, supporting the school's long and illustrious history of instrumental music. Students from SRVHS will perform alongside the members of the Diablo Symphony under the baton of Matilda Hofman. Come enjoy an evening of "An American in Paris (and Other Travels)," featuring the music of Gershwin as well as Mozart, Mahoney, and Sibelius. All proceeds will go to the SRVHS Instrumental Music Program, which includes the Concert Band, Symphonic Band, Orchestra, Jazz Band, Ensemble, and Marching Ensemble programs. Join us **Saturday, February 7, 7 p.m.**, in the **San Ramon Valley High School Performing Arts Center** in Danville. Tickets are available at the door.



The Diablo Symphony Association
P.O. Box 2222
Walnut Creek, CA 94595
925-676-5888

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DIABLO SYMPHONY

ORCHESTRA

NOTEWORTHY NEWS

February 2015

52nd Season|2014-2015

Our 52nd Season of Musical Excellence Is All About "Celebrating Community!"

Virtuoso Violinist Geneva Lewis

Violinist **Geneva Lewis**, 16, originally from Auckland, New Zealand, is a merit scholarship student at the Colburn Community School of Performing Arts in Los Angeles, where she studies with Aimee Kreston, concertmaster of the Pasadena Symphony. Lewis made her orchestral debut at age 11 and has since matured into an exceptional violinist.

Lewis' powerful performances have gained her first-prize wins in numerous competitions, including the Brentwood Concerto Competition, Parness Concerto Competition, Southern California Junior Bach Festival Complete Works Audition, and American Protégé International Piano and Strings Competition. Lewis was presented with the Discover Prize in the Young Musicians Foundation Debut Concerto Competition and won the Doublestop Foundation's "Artist In You" Instrument Loan Competition. Lewis has twice reached the semifinals of the Fischoff National Chamber Music Competition. As a soloist, she

has performed with the Brentwood Westwood Symphony Orchestra, Antelope Valley Symphony Orchestra, Culver



City Symphony, Pasadena Pops, and Sierra Summer Festival Orchestra (where she played to standing ovations) and at such venues as the Mozarteum in Salzburg and Carnegie Hall's Weill Recital Hall.

In 2012 Lewis was cast alongside Emmy Award-winning actress Mariette Hartley as the young virtuoso violinist Erica Morini in

the *LA Times* Critic's Choice *The Morini Strad*. This play featured prominently Lewis' performance of parts of the Tchaikovsky concerto. In 2014 Lewis performed a duet with American violinist and former concertmaster of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra Glenn Dicterow at UCLA's Royce Hall. Lewis' performance of **Mozart's Violin Concerto in G Major**, composed in 1775 when Mozart was just 19 years old, will be her solo debut with the Diablo Symphony.

This concert will also include an optimistic and celebratory piece by American composer and faculty member of the Juilliard School **Shafer Mahoney** entitled "**Sparkle**," Finnish composer **Jean Sibelius** "**Oceanides**" (written for his one and only trip to the United States), and **George Gershwin's "An American in Paris."** Concert dates: **Friday, February 6, 8 p.m.**, at the **Rossmoor Event Center** (tickets are \$10 and available only at the door) and **Sunday, February 8, 2 p.m.**, at the **Leshar Center for the Arts** (tickets available online at www.lesherartscenter.org).

'Spring' into Action: Purchase Tickets for March Concerts Now!

Our wonderful program in March, "**Enigma Variations**," will feature unforgettable works by French composer **Georges Bizet**, Hungarian composer **Béla Bartók**, and English composers **Henry Purcell** and **Sir Edward Elgar**.

Consisting of French folklike themes, Bizet's *L'Arlesienne Suite No. 2* was premiered in 1872, with Bizet playing backstage on the harmonium.

We will perform excerpts from Bartók's *Romanian Folk Dances*, originally played on shepherd's flute or fiddle. Written in 1915 and based on Romanian music from Transylvania, these selections will be conducted by last year's gala winner, Diablo Symphony board member **Elaine McClintic**!

Purcell's *Funeral Music of Queen Mary* is a simple and stately march played at the funeral of Queen Mary II of England in 1695—coincidentally, Purcell died later that same year, at the age of 36, and excerpts of this piece were played at his own funeral. Interestingly, almost 280 years later, Wendy Carlos recorded a version of this work, using a Moog synthesizer, for Stanley Kubrick's movie *A Clockwork Orange*.

Elgar's lovely "**Sospiri**" was written for strings and harp and first performed just prior to World War I in 1914. A short yet nostalgic adagio filled with melancholy beauty and intensity, it was most likely influenced by the death of a dear family friend, American Julia "Pippa" Worthington.

Completed in 1899 and arguably Elgar's finest work, *Enigma Variations* is composed of a series of musical portraits based on friends and family of Elgar. His wife, Caroline Alice Elgar, inspired the **First Variation**; the **Eighth Variation** was meant for a matron of the arts, Winifred Norbury, who had a distinctive laugh; and a friend's bulldog was the muse for the **Eleventh Variation**.

CONCERT DATES:

• **Friday, March 20, 8 p.m.**, in the **Fireside Room, Gateway Clubhouse, Rossmoor**. Tickets available at the door.
• **Sunday, March 22, 2 p.m.**, at the **Leshar Center for the Arts**. Tickets available online at www.lesherartscenter.org

An Enchanted Evening *Indeed*

The Symphony's 35th annual fund-raising gala, "Some Enchanted Evening," supporting the Symphony and its education and outreach programs, was held this season at Rossmoor's Event Center.

Attendees enjoyed a delicious sit-down dinner, wine pull, silent auction, and live auction led by professional auctioneer **Kenn Cunningham**. Many sought-after items were auctioned off, including gourmet cakes, "Conduct the Symphony," and "Join the Percussion Section." Congratulations to **Kathryn Crandell**, a member of our horn section, who will conduct the orchestra at a concert next season. As always, the Symphony depends on this annual event as its primary source of funding, because ticket sales do not cover the cost of putting on concerts in our community. We would like to thank all the wonderful attendees, donors, and volunteers who contributed to the tremendous success of this event, and we look forward to seeing even more of you next year!

