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Twenty years ago the Elmhurst Symphony Association launched the search for a new conductor for the Elmhurst Symphony Orchestra to replace Dale Clevenger, the renowned principal French horn player for the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, who had stepped down from the position. Janet Hodge, a long-time ESO volunteer and supporter of the Symphony, recalls the decision to offer the position to Stephen Alltop. "I clearly remember the day our music director search committee decided Stephen was the person we wanted," she remarked. "He seemed so young and full of energy. We were sure that we made the right choice." And they had.

"Over the twenty years that Stephen Alltop has been its music director, the Elmhurst Symphony has grown in quality as never before in its history," said Dr. Ted Hatmaker, faculty member at Northern Illinois University and pre-concert lecturer for the Symphony. "The orchestra has sounded the best it ever has, the players love playing for him, and his musical selections have offered new worlds to listeners and at the same time provided vibrant interpretations of time-honored classics," Hatmaker continued. "His prodigious ability to communicate, both to individuals and large groups, has made many friends, supporters and appreciative audience members for the Elmhurst Symphony Orchestra."

Elmhurst Symphony Orchestra Executive Director, Cynthia Bergquist Krainc, says it has been "exciting and interesting to have worked with Stephen for the last ten years. With the wide variety of repertoire we perform, all of our collaborations with different performance organizations, and the many commissioned works we have presented, it has been a rich musical experience. We have performed with groups ranging from Apollo Chorus of Chicago to our local DuPage Dance Academy and an internationally renowned visual artist, and we have commissioned original pieces and arrangements of pieces. Every concert is a unique experience that demonstrates the power of live performance. Stephen has created an environment that is exciting, challenging and rewarding for everyone--musicians, audience, guest artists, staff, and volunteers."

To recognize this milestone anniversary season, the Elmhurst Symphony Association is honoring its Conductor and Music Director, Stephen Alltop, in a celebration of his 20 years of beautiful music-making and outreach with the orchestra. "Celebrate Stephen" will take place on April 16, 2016, at Harry Caray's at the Westin in Lombard, 70 Yorktown Center, beginning at 6:00 p.m. The Honorable Steve Morley, mayor of Elmhurst, will serve as Master of Ceremonies for an evening of tributes, cocktails and dinner, and an orchestral concert. The event, sponsored in part by Republic Services, will also help the Symphony's Make More Music campaign reach its goal. Thanks to generous long-time supporters, all contributions to the ESO and the net proceeds from the gala, including those from a silent auction featuring original artwork, a musical performance in your home, and other items, will be matched dollar for dollar, up to \$100,000, ending at midnight on April 16.

Please join the Elmhurst Symphony Orchestra's members, friends and supporters for a celebratory evening saluting Stephen Alltop. Tickets are \$125 each, \$225 for two, or \$900 for a table of eight. For more information and to purchase tickets for the event, please call the ESO office at [630-941-0202](tel:630-941-0202). Tickets can also be purchased on the ESO website, www.elmhurstsymphony.org.