



ECISO COVID-19 UPDATE 7/23/0

Dear ECISO friends,

As we find ourselves deep into summer, I am happy to report that despite a truncated spring concert schedule, we achieved many of our artistic and budgetary goals in the 19-20 season. Concert attendance was particularly strong in the past season, as evidenced by a record-breaking February attendance at our New London Big Band concert and exceptional ticket sales at every concert. You can read more about it by **viewing my report below**, along with both our Music Director & Conductor, Toshiyuki Shimada's and our outgoing Board President, Ellen Cummings' reports. There was much to celebrate, and I am so grateful to have a behind-the-scenes view of all that happens to make our season come together and help our mission resonate into our community.

Speaking of seasons coming together, **we are continuing to work on our season for 2020-21**. For our subscribers, subscription renewals will be sent out when we have more clarity, but we are holding your seats for when this extended intermission is lifted. Single ticket sales will also go into effect and be widely publicized once our dates are solidified. We are learning as much as we can about the impact of the global pandemic upon how we perform in public to make it safe for both audience members and musicians.

We do hope to have some opportunities to play **live music for you in the near future** at a venue that will allow for adequate social distancing. Please stay tuned as we keep you updated through our emails and social media. As a reminder for ticketholders (subscribers or single ticket buyers), you have a few options for unused tickets to any of our cancelled concerts in the 19-20 season, listed below:

- 1.) Donate the value of your unused ticket(s) back to the ECISO as a generous tax-deductible contribution. We will send you an acknowledgment letter for your taxes that declare the value of your gift.
- 2.) Turn in your unused ticket(s) and ask that they be used to provide tickets next season (2020-21) for frontline medical workers, first responders, and essential workers.
- 3.) Exchange your ticket(s) for vouchers that can be used next season to bring along friends, family, or other acquaintances to our concerts.
- 4.) Request a refund for your unused ticket(s).

Please call our office at 860-443-2876 to make any arrangements or email your inquiry or request to info@ectsymphony.com. On behalf of the ECISO, stay cool, safe, and healthy.

Sincerely,

Caleb Bailey
Executive Director

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The Eastern Connecticut Symphony Orchestra continues to closely monitoring the development of the coronavirus (COVID-19) as it pertains to our patrons in and around our region. We are deeply committed to the safety and well-being of our concertgoers.

For daily State of CT updates, see <https://portal.ct.gov/Coronavirus>

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Executive Director's Report

Our 19-20 season has come to an end, although certainly not the end that anyone would have expected. The global pandemic changed us: our orchestra practices, the way we go about our lives, and the very nature of what it means to co-exist safely with our fellow humans. One thing that hasn't changed is the generosity and resilience of our community that helped us to pull through this challenging time.

While we had to cancel our last two subscription concerts, Young People's Concerts, a planned free concert at the Cathedral of St. Patrick in Norwich, and our Instrumental Competition finals, we were able to have a thriving season regardless.

Without a doubt, we were able to rely on our ECSO family in this unprecedented time. Between patrons continuing to support our online Gala and annual fund, musicians recording videos from their homes, Board members helping navigate through many time sensitive decisions, our tightly knit tapestry was key to our success. Although it manifested in new ways, we were able to continue our mission *"to inspire, educate, and connect our communities through live orchestral music"*. Below are some highlights from the season through that lens:

Inspire

As this season marked Music Director & Conductor, Toshiyuki Shimada's 10th year with the ECSO, we had a special season in store with many collaborations, celebrations, and memorable musical moments. Toshi was celebrated by many close symphony friends (from multiple symphonies!) at a special event in November which helped to raise money for his unique artistic vision moving forward. Thanks to our continually generous patrons, we were able to commission a brand-new podium for Toshi. Toshi's dedicated contributions to the ECSO have infused our organization with a joyful spirit of music and defined the last 10 years as the orchestra continually achieves greater levels of artistry and scope of programming. We look forward to rescheduling for future seasons the works and artists that we were unable to host this season.

We brought to life favored classics as well as an eclectic range of pieces such as Freddie Mercury's *Bohemian Rhapsody* and New London's own Charles Frink's *John Henry*, sung by our beloved Chorus. A collaboration years in the making, we teamed up with the New London Big Band for an evening of big band-era composers mixed with orchestral delights, topped off by an unforgettable performance by our own Principal Clarinet, Kelli O'Connor. Similarly, no one who attended their chamber concerts and mainstage performances in Willimantic and New London can forget our new Turkish friends, Çağatay Akyol and Bülent

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Evcil, and their astounding performance of Mozart's Flute & Harp Concerto with rousing encores. Once again, we heard the incredible talent of our Instrumental Competition winner, Hannah Cho with her amazing Brahms Violin Concerto.

In terms of earned income, **we exceeded our single ticket goals on every single concert**, including February record-setting box office numbers for our collaboration with the New London Big Band.

Educate

Our Music in the Schools program was revised this year, led by our orchestra musicians in smaller ensembles. Planned programming featured a mix of orchestral masterworks, video game music, and movie soundtracks to provide an interactive and fun performance for school children in New London County. When school systems transitioned to at-home learning, we quickly pivoted this program into a new online resource that we titled **"Music in the Homes."** These resources include educational videos posted on our YouTube channel as well as live in-person classes taught by our musicians. Combined we managed to **reach 1,500 children with music education** at home that otherwise would have been difficult for them to obtain. Moving forward, we hope to continue to offer both at-home educational content as well as live, interactive performances when permitted and deemed safe to do so.

As our Young People's Concerts were also canceled, we are going to perform the Carnegie Hall program, Link Up: The Orchestra Moves during the upcoming school year. This continuation of last year's program allows for year-long learning through curriculum support offered free of charge from Carnegie Hall which culminates in an interactive musical experience where the children perform from their seats through singing, dancing, and playing the recorder.

The Education Committee has continued to meet and refine one of the most important parts of our service to the community. Given the challenges ahead for schools, students, and the entire education system, we are eager to continue the conversation with teachers and community members to determine the best way for the ECSO to enact our mission.

Connect

Connecting with our communities is the third aspect of our mission that we commit to each year. While this was made more difficult towards the 2nd half of our season, we were able to make many strides towards enriching our region through music. From a long-planned runout, to lifting up the voice of a revered New London composer, many connections were made with in-person performances prior to the global pandemic.

Our performance at Eastern Connecticut State University on February 28, which they supported through sponsorship, helped to celebrate the connection between the Eastern Connecticut Symphony Orchestra and the Willimantic area. In 1954, what was then the New London Symphony merged with the Willimantic Symphony to form the Eastern Connecticut Symphony Orchestra. Since orchestral performances from our organization ceased when the Jorgensen Center began its operations, the capacity hall and Willimantic region deeply appreciated our return. In addition to this, we had planned another free Cathedral of St. Patrick concert in Norwich, CT on Palm Sunday, which would continue our commitment to making orchestral music accessible to all in our region. We were once again awarded the State of Connecticut "ARTE-accesible" grant, which will help us reach the Spanish-speaking population in New London County when we reschedule this performance.

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Musically, our Chorus stretched its repertoire through the preparation of New London composer, Charles Frink's *John Henry*, a folk tale set to words and music. Its dramatic telling was artistically realized by Toshi and our Chorus Director, Wendy Moy, who conducted the piece on our November concert. This work was an NEA grant-funded commission that our Emeritus Music Director, Victor Norman, worked on with Charles Frink, who was one of the founding performers in the ECSO as a young man.

Looking Forward

We thank Board President Ellen Cummings for her dynamic leadership over the past two years that have yielded success in the form of new partnerships, greater organizational clarity, and planning for our current and upcoming milestones. Our orchestra's mission resonates more deeply thanks to her leadership with the Board. While she has been board president, she has also chaired the Development Committee, one of the crucial groups that ensures we are financially stable. Her guidance enabled us to partner with the Friends to transform our Gala into an online-only event. We were able to celebrate Toshi in many ways with her thorough and thoughtful council along with her fellow committee members. You as supporters continued to amaze us as **we were able to reach and exceed our annual fund goal for the fourth year in a row**. We cannot thank you enough. We will continue to think of every opportunity to demonstrate our gratitude through music wherever and however possible.

Coming up after the upcoming season, we will celebrate our 75th anniversary in the 2021-22 season. I am delighted to work with Catherine Marrion, the incoming Board President, and the many creative, inspired, and determined Board members. Another voice that will be perhaps the most important of all for us to listen to is yours. We hope you'll reach out if you are feeling moved to serve as one of our volunteers, Chorus members, Friends, student ushers, interns, or perhaps as a committee member on a topic that you are passionate about. Like all of our mission's activities, we rely upon our community to ensure that we are hitting the mark.

The times ahead are sure to be turbulent, with many unknowns continuing to block the path of even-keeled planning that is desired in all our lives. However, there are two things you can be certain of regarding the ECSO and the upcoming season. One is that we will continue to uphold the health and safety of our audience members, volunteers, musicians, and everyone involved in our productions above all else. We will not put anyone in a compromising position and will be flexible in our planning and thinking as new information continues to come to light. The second is that we will not stop listening to our ECSO family so that we may perform the most impassioned, uplifting, and joyful music for you all. From our hearts to yours, we wish all of you a safe and healthy summer and eagerly await the next time we can find ourselves where we'd like to be most of all - together.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Caleb Bailey'.

Caleb Bailey
Executive Director

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ECSO President's Report

The 2019-2020 ECSO season will long be remembered as the season cut short due to the global pandemic. But prior to the season's abrupt ending, so many wonderful things happened!

With great fanfare, we celebrated Toshiyuki Shimada's 10-year anniversary as our Music Director and Conductor. On opening night, patrons Bettie and Alan Proctor presented Toshi with a spectacular gold sculpture. Created by Alan, the work depicts Maestro Shimada conducting the orchestra. Throughout the season, proclamations came in from government officials around the state of Connecticut congratulating Toshi on his numerous accomplishments over the past ten years. During our February 29th concert, Toshi was presented a newly constructed podium with safety features designed to keep our music director safe and in full view of the orchestra. In November, a special event was held at the Branford House where several of our musicians offered kind (and sometimes funny!) words and musical interludes for their beloved conductor. The event, chaired by Liane Crawford, raised \$45,000 for a dedicated fund honoring Toshiyuki Shimada who never ceases to amaze our audiences with his varied music selections and exquisite conducting skills. Each season he challenges our musicians to reach new heights while bringing the audience to new levels of classical music appreciation. I extend my deepest gratitude to Toshi and to all our musicians who bring the beauty and excitement of live classical music to the Garde stage for our enjoyment.

The Eastern Connecticut Symphony Chorus, under the direction of Wendy K. Moy, attracted new and younger audience members at our November concert with two performances: *Bohemian Rhapsody* by Freddie Mercury and *John Henry* by Charles Frink. Ms. Moy has accepted a new position as Assistant Professor of Music Education at Syracuse University. We wish her all the best.

Our mission -- "to inspire, educate, and connect our communities through live orchestral music"-- is perfectly illustrated by the Instrumental Competition. In 2019, first place was awarded to violinist Hanna Cho who was the featured soloist at our November concert. Her performance of Brahms' *Violin Concerto in D Major, op. 77* was astonishing. It fills my heart with joy listening to these young musicians who possess so much talent.

Thanks to the initiative of board member Michael Pernal, this season we reached beyond the Garde Arts Center with a "run-out" concert in Willimantic hosted by Eastern Connecticut State University at the Fine Arts Instructional Center. The concert "Turkish Delight" featured two visiting artists from Turkey: Bülent Evcil, a flutist, and Çağatay Akyol, harpist. The (free) reserved seats were "sold-out"! This initiative proved to be highly successful, expanding our eastern Connecticut reach and audience. Bringing live orchestral music to new audiences is something I look forward to doing again in the future.

Sadly, the final two concerts of the season were cancelled along with many other public events including our annual gala. I was overwhelmed by the generosity of our season ticket holders who donated their tickets for the last two concerts back to the ECSO. Many asked that their tickets be given to essential workers for use when the orchestra returns to the Garde Arts stage next season. Thanks to our Executive Director Caleb Bailey's leadership, the gala and the "Education in the Schools" programs were made available online. Caleb's ability to manage operations during this pandemic has been impressive. Thanks, Caleb, for keeping our ship on course during this storm.

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Next year we begin planning for the ECSO's 75th anniversary. I know it will be a glorious celebration!

As my two-year term as president ends, I want to thank my fellow board members for your support and dedication to this organization that we all dearly love. I know we all look forward to once again being able to settle into our seats at the Garde and listening attentively and appreciatively to our orchestra filling the hall with live, beautifully rendered classical music.

Respectfully submitted,

Ellen C. Cummings
Outgoing ECSO Board President

ECSO Music Director & Conductor's Annual Report 2020

My tenth season (2019-20) with the Eastern Connecticut Symphony Orchestra started on October 26th with a spectacular opening performance of Kenneth Fuchs' exuberant *Discover the Wild*, and a stunning performance from Solomiya Ivakhiv on Tchaikovsky's *Violin Concerto*. Both Ken and Solomiya represented the University of Connecticut. The concert concluded with Dvořák's *Symphony No. 9 (From the New World)*, which was my audition piece for my present position. Our Youth Symphony collaborated side by side with the ECSO musicians on an excellent rendition of *The Star-Spangled Banner*. I especially want to thank Liane Crawford and her Toshi 10th Event committee for a splendid party at the Branford House, including my other former and present orchestra board members. Our November 23rd concert was highlighted by a superb performance from Hannah Cho, who was the winner of the Instrumental Competition. She performed Brahms's *Violin Concerto* with musical maturity and polished technique. The unique work on the program was the transcription of *Bohemian Rhapsody* by Freddie Mercury, arranged for orchestra and chorus by Fedor Vrtacinik. The performance of Charles Frink's *John Henry* by the Eastern Connecticut Symphony Chorus, under the direction of Wendy Moy, added local flavor. The orchestra performed Strauss's *Death and Transfiguration* with passion.

Our February 1st concert was also unique; the ECSO collaborated with the New London Big Band, presenting some of the classical big band tunes as well as new works by band leader Sean Nelson. The orchestra also presented a work by Florence Price called *Concert Overture No. 2*. The highlight of the concert was an amazing performance by our very own Kelli O'Connor on Artie Shaw's *Clarinet Concerto*. No one guessed our February 29th was going to be the last concert of the season. Our distinguished guests, Bülent Evcil (Flute) and Çağatay Akyol (Harp) from the Turkish Republic mesmerized our orchestra and audience by performing Mozart's heavenly *Flute and Harp Concerto*, followed by Turkish encores. The orchestra performed a work by the famous Turkish composer, Ferit Tüzün's *Esintiler*, and Beethoven's *Symphony No. 7* (commemorating his 250th Anniversary).

In the beginning of March, as the fire door came down suddenly, we were forced to stop performing because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Our two main concerts, as well as our Palm Sunday and Young People's concerts were cancelled. Other important events were also cancelled. The rest of the season has been devoted to scenario planning for future performances and gearing our efforts to the virtual stage. As I

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write this report, we have no solid answers regarding indoor future performances by the Eastern Connecticut Symphony Orchestra.

We are fortunate to have Caleb Bailey and Dan Brandl in our office sustaining the ECSO's undiminished energy. I realize that it is one of the most difficult times in their careers, and their steady efforts to restructure our concert season. I am grateful that we have our solid board of the trustees and I bow to them for their effort to keep our orchestra in survival mode. Our dear Friends of the Symphony managed to put the annual Gala online, and I thank all of them for their undiminished passion in supporting our orchestra. Our Youth Ensemble program has been growing, but now I feel sorry for the senior members of the ensemble for not being able to meet anymore. So, the only thing I know now is that live concerts can never be replaced by virtual performance, and we must strive to keep our mission alive. "... to inspire, educate, and connect our communities through **LIVE ORCHESTRAL MUSIC.**" "The show must go on" has a deeper meaning now.

Respectfully submitted,

Toshiyuki Shimada
Music Director and Conductor

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