

The New Crossroads of American Music

Press Release



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ILLNESS PREVENTS GUTIÉRREZ FROM APPEARING AT EASTERN MUSIC FESTIVAL

Greensboro, NC- EMF's **Lincoln Financial Festival Orchestra Series** continues on **Saturday, July 18, 2009 at 8pm**, with a concert featuring the technically superb pianist **Awadagin Pratt** in a special performance of Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 4 in G major, op.58. Horacio Gutiérrez, who was originally scheduled to perform with the Festival Orchestra, had to cancel due to illness. Led by **Maestro Gerard Schwarz**, the Eastern Festival Orchestra will also present works by Beethoven and Janáček. A rare treat, **guest conductor, Bright Sheng will conduct his own Tibetan Swing**. The concert will take place in **Dana Auditorium at Guilford College** (5800 West Friendly Ave., Greensboro, NC 27410). There will be an additional performance on **Sunday, July 19, 2009 at Appalachian State University's "An Appalachian Summer"** in Boone, North Carolina. Immediately following the Boone performance the audience is invited to participate in a Question and Answer session with Mr. Pratt and Mr. Schwarz.

For the Greensboro performance, tickets may be purchased for \$51 for reserved seating and \$41 for general admission by calling the EMF Box Office at Triad Stage at 336.272.0160 or 866-579-TIXX, or online at www.EasternMusicFestival.org. Pricing for the Boone performance varies with tickets available at 800.841.2787 or www.appsummer.org.

In 1992, **Awadagin Pratt** won the Naumburg International Piano Competition and two years later was awarded a 1994 Avery Fisher Career Grant. He has played numerous recitals throughout the U.S. including performances in New York at Lincoln Center, Washington, D.C. at the Kennedy Center, Los Angeles at the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion

and Chicago at Orchestra Hall. His many orchestral performances include appearances with the New York Philharmonic, Orchestra of St. Luke's, Minnesota Orchestra and the Pittsburgh, St. Louis, National, Detroit and New Jersey symphonies. He is currently an Associate Professor of Piano and Artist in Residence at the College Conservatory of Music at the University of Cincinnati.

More About Awadagin Pratt

Among his generation of concert artists, pianist **Awadagin Pratt** is acclaimed for his musical insight and intensely involving performances that receive tremendous audience response and press attention throughout the United States. Born in Pittsburgh, Awadagin Pratt began studying piano at the age of six. Three years later, having moved to Normal, Illinois, with his family, he also began studying violin. At the age of 16, he entered the University of Illinois where he studied piano, violin and conducting. He subsequently enrolled at the Peabody Conservatory of Music where he became the first student in the school's history to receive diplomas in three performance areas - piano, violin and conducting. In 1992 Mr. Pratt won the Naumburg International Piano Competition and two years later was awarded a 1994 Avery Fisher Career Grant.

He has played numerous recitals throughout the U.S. including performances in New York at Lincoln Center, Washington, D.C., at the Kennedy Center, Los Angeles at the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion and Chicago at Orchestra Hall. His many orchestral performances include appearances with the New York Philharmonic, Orchestra of St. Luke's, Minnesota Orchestra, and the Pittsburgh, St. Louis, National, Detroit and New Jersey symphonies. Major summer festival engagements include Ravinia, Blossom, Wolf Trap, Caramoor, Aspen, the Hollywood Bowl and the Mostly Mozart Festival in Tokyo. Mr. Pratt is also the artistic director of the Next Generation Festival, a two-week chamber music festival in Lancaster, Pa.; tours with the Dedalus String Quartet; and appears with cellist Zuill Bailey in duo recitals throughout the U.S. Recent and upcoming appearances include recital engagements at the Kennedy Center and National Gallery in Washington, D.C., the New Jersey Performing Arts Center in Newark and in La Jolla and Savannah, as well as return appearances with the orchestras of Atlanta, Baltimore, Cincinnati, Indianapolis, Milwaukee, Seattle, Colorado, Kansas City, Utah, Nashville and San Antonio. As a conductor, Mr. Pratt has participated in American Symphony Orchestra League and Conductor's Guild workshops as well as in the National Conducting Institute, where he worked closely with Leonard Slatkin and conducted the National Symphony at the Kennedy Center. He has also conducted the Toledo, New Mexico, Winston-Salem, Santa Fe and Prince George County symphonies, the Concertante di Chicago and two orchestras in Japan.

A great favorite on college and university performing arts series and a strong advocate of music education, Awadagin Pratt participates in numerous residency and outreach activities wherever he appears; these activities may include master classes, children's recitals, play/talk demonstrations and question/answer sessions for students of all ages. Internationally, Mr. Pratt has toured Japan four times and performed in Germany, Italy, Switzerland, Poland, Israel and South Africa. Awadagin Pratt has been the subject of numerous articles in the national press, including *Newsweek*, *People magazine*, *USA Weekend*, *New York Newsday*, *Emerge* and *Mirabella*. He was named one of the 50

Leaders of Tomorrow in *Ebony magazine's* special 50th anniversary issue and has been featured on National Public Radio's "Performance Today," "St. Paul Sunday Morning" and "Weekend Edition." On television, Mr. Pratt has performed on the "Today" show, "Good Morning America," and "Sesame Street," been profiled on CBS "Sunday Morning" and was one of the featured soloists on PBS's "Live from the Kennedy Center - A Salute to Slava." He also performed twice at the White House at the invitation of President and Mrs. Clinton. In September 1993 Mr. Pratt signed an exclusive recording contract with Angel/EMI. His debut album, *A Long Way From Normal*, was released in 1994. Subsequent recital discs include an all-Beethoven sonata CD, *Live from South Africa* and *Transformations*. His most recent Angel/EMI recording is an all-Bach disc with the St. Lawrence String Quartet. Mr. Pratt is currently an associate professor of piano and artist in residence at the College Conservatory of Music at the University of Cincinnati.

More about Bright Sheng

Bright Sheng is respected as one of the foremost composers of our time whose stage, orchestral, chamber, and vocal works are performed regularly throughout North America, Europe, and Asia. Sheng's music is noted for its lyrical and limpid melodies, a Shostakovich sense of breath in music phrases, a Bartokian sense of rhythmic propulsion, and dramatic and theatrical gestures. Many of Sheng's works have strong Chinese and Asian influences, a result of his diligent study of Asian musical cultures for over three decades. He was proclaimed by the MacArthur Foundation in 2001 as "an innovative composer who merges diverse musical customs in works that transcend conventional aesthetic boundaries." His music was further described as "a fresh voice in cross-cultural music." The Foundation predicts that "Bright Sheng will continue to be an important leader in exploring and bridging musical traditions."

Born on December 6th, 1955, in Shanghai, Sheng began studying the piano with his mother at age four. During China's infamous Cultural Revolution, at fifteen he was sent to the remote province of Qinghai—a bordering state of China and Tibet—where for seven years he performed as a pianist and percussionist in the provincial folk music and dance theater and studied folk music of the region. When China's universities reopened in 1978, he was among the first students admitted to the Shanghai Conservatory of Music where, from 1978-82, he studied composition with Wang Jianzhong before earning his B.M. He moved to New York City in 1982 and, at Queens College, CUNY, he studied composition with George Perle and Hugo Weisgall, Schenkerian Analysis with Carl Schackter, and piano with Morey Ritt, and he earned his M.A. in 1984. He earned his D.M.A. in 1993 from Columbia University where he studied composition with Chou Wen-chung, Jack Beeson, and Mario Davidovsky. During that period, as a student fellow at Tanglewood Music Center in 1985, he met Leonard Bernstein who later became Sheng's mentor. Sheng studied composition and conducting with Bernstein privately until Bernstein's passing in 1990.

During his student years, Sheng's talent already emerged of its own accord, receiving many honors in China, as well as three fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, a Charles Ives Scholarship Award from the American Academy and Institute of

Arts and Letters, and the awards from the Jerome Foundation, Guggenheim Foundation, Naumburg Foundation, and Rockefeller Foundation.

In 1999, at the invitation of President Clinton, Sheng received a special commission from The White House to create a new work honoring the visiting Chinese Premiere Zhu, Rongji. The resulting *Three Songs for Pipa and Cello* was premiered by Wu Man and Yo-Yo Ma during the state dinner hosted by the Clintons. In 2001, Sheng received the MacArthur Foundation Fellowship and the American Award in Music from the American Academy of Arts and Letters and an ASCAP Achievement Award the following year. Sheng has taught composition at the University of Michigan since 1995, where he was professor of music from 1997-2003 and has been the Leonard Bernstein Distinguished University Professor of Music since 2003. Sheng was the recipient of the Michigan Arts Award and a Rackham fellowship from the University of Michigan in 2000.

Sheng's works are well known for their dramatic style and historical significance. Two of his major orchestral works: *H'un: In Memoriam 1966-76* (1988) and *Naking! Nanking!*—a Threnody for Pipa and Orchestra (2000)—and his opera *Madam Mao* (2003) were indeed inspired by events in recent Chinese history. *H'un*, commissioned and premiered in 1988 by the New York Chamber Symphony, is Sheng's landmark portrait of the Chinese Culture Revolution. Kurt Masur and the New York Philharmonic performed *H'un* in six cities on their 1993 European tour after giving performances in New York City and in Washington, D.C. It established Sheng's reputation as a composer and has been programmed by the Chicago Symphony, the Cleveland Orchestra, the Tokyo Philharmonic, and many other major orchestras around the world.

More about Gerard Schwarz

Born to Viennese parents, EMF music director **Gerard Schwarz** has served as the Seattle Symphony Orchestra's music director since 1985. He is a recipient of the Ditson Conductor's award from Columbia University and was the first American to be named Conductor of the Year by *Musical America*. He holds numerous honorary doctorates, including ones from The Juilliard School, Cornish College of the Arts, Seattle University, University of Puget Sound, and Fairleigh Dickinson University. Recent highlights for Maestro Schwarz include two consecutive Emmy Awards in 2007 and 2008 for televised performances with Seattle Symphony; leading Seattle Symphony in its recent Southern California Tour; and conducting Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony* with the 600-member community orchestra and chorus for His Holiness the Dalai Lama during the recent visit to Seattle sponsored by Seeds of Compassion.

Maestro Schwarz has received 12 GRAMMY® nominations, six ASCAP awards, and numerous *Stereo Review* and Ovation awards. In June 2007, he received an Emmy for his performance with Seattle Symphony of Shostakovich's *Eighth Symphony*. Moreover, Maestro Schwarz won critical acclaim that season for his remarkable collaboration with Dale Chihuly to present Bartók's *Bluebeard's Castle*. His extensive discography of some 250 releases showcases his collaborations with some of the world's most prestigious orchestras, including The Philadelphia Orchestra; the Tokyo, Czech and Royal Liverpool philharmonics; the London Symphony Orchestra, Orchestra National de France and

Berlin Radio Symphony; the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra; and the New York Chamber and Seattle symphonies. Soon to be released are works by Mahler, Arthur Foote, Bright Sheng, and Samuel Jones, as well as Deems Taylor's *Peter Ibbetson* and the first complete recording of Kurt Weill's *Eternal Road*.

In addition to his leadership at Eastern Music Festival, Maestro Schwarz has also served as music director of New York's Mostly Mozart Festival, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, and New York Chamber Symphony, as well as artistic advisor to Tokyu Bunkamura's Orchard Hall.

Tickets: Triad Stage Box Office 336.272.0160 or 866.579.TIXX or www.EasternMusicFestival.org.

*a service fee will apply

Discounts are available for full-time students with a valid ID, seniors aged 65 or older, and groups of 10 or more for most performances. Young Artists and EMF*kids* concerts offer family-friendly packages. Please call the box office about packages. This season most discounts will be available at the door. Discounts and gift certificates will not be accepted for concerts designated as special events.

**Dates, programs, venues, and artists are subject to change.*

More about the Eastern Music Festival

Now in its 48th year, the Eastern Music Festival & School is recognized for its prodigious contributions to the field of American music and its commitment to nurturing talented American and international youth through a collaborative learning process. The program brings together a cross-section of America's most sought-after artists with pre-professional students in a five-week schedule of 100 concerts and music-related events. **Music Director Gerard Schwarz** heads a distinguished list of participating artists scheduled for 2009, including **Peter Serkin, Sarah Chang, Awadagin Pratt, Nadja Salerno Sonnenberg, Xavier Phillips**, plus many others.

The Festival also produces a popular EMF*fringe* series of alternative programming, featuring everything from Americana to alt country, blues, jazz and gospel with artists such as **Mike Cross, The John Cowan Band, Laurelyn Dossett, Steep Canyon Rangers, Waybacks, The Chris Hicks Band**, blues artist **Larry McCray** and more. EMF*kids* offers camps and concerts with each uniquely designed to foster a love and knowledge for classical and non-classical music. This year's concerts are **Shana Banana** and **Dan Zanes**. EMF*jazz&blues* runs each spring and EMF Fringe on the Fall each autumn. Season tickets on sale through June 27th (EMF*fringe* season tickets on sale through July 9th); single tickets on sale now. www.EasternMusicFestival.org; Box Office 336.272.0160 or 866.579-TIXX.

The 2009 Eastern Music Festival season is sponsored in part by the United Arts Council of Greater Greensboro, the North Carolina Arts Council, Lincoln Financial Foundation,

National Endowment for the Arts, Southern Arts Federation, WFDD Triad Arts Station, Greensboro's News and Record, Continental Airways, Yes! Weekly, and Piedmont Music Center (Steinway Pianos).

For more information about EMF or its programs, please visit www.EasternMusicFestival.org, or call toll free: 1.877.833.6753

The Eastern Music Festival's mission is to promote musical enrichment, excellence, professional collaboration, innovation and diversity through a nationally-recognized teaching program, music festival, concerts and other programs which will enhance the quality of life, health and vitality of our region.

EMF is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization.
All contributions are tax deductible to the full extent allowed by law.

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