

The New Crossroads of American Music

Press Release



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YOUNG ARTISTS ORCHESTRAS TO
PERFORM RUSSIAN MASTER WORKS PLUS
CONTEMPORARY PIECES BY SHENG AND
POULENC

“The players kept up with the demands of the tricky rhythms throughout, which might have created problems for less skilled musicians.”

“...the quality of the music-making was quite high. Those seeking out skilled musicians on the rise need look no further than the young artists at the Eastern Music Festival, who will play, among other works, ... Shostakovich's "Festival Overture" and Tchaikovsky's Fifth Symphony July 16; Shostakovich's Fifth Symphony July 17...”

– Both quotes by Steve Row, reviewer for Classical Voice of North Carolina, of the opening Young Artists Orchestra concert on July 3, 2009

Greensboro, NC- EMF's Young Artists Orchestras series continues with two concerts displaying the festival's exceptionally talented young performers. The first of these will take place on **Thursday, July 16, 2009** showcasing the Eastern Symphony Orchestra, under the baton of composer and **guest conductor Bright Sheng**. The program will include works by Russians Shostakovich and Tchaikovsky, along with a special piece composed by the conductor himself, and showcasing **flutist Les Roettges** as a soloist. **On Friday, July 17, 2009** the Guilford Symphony Orchestra will take the stage, conducted by **José-Luis Novo**, in a performance featuring musical compositions by Poulenc and Shostakovich. Both concerts will be held **at 8pm** in **Dana Auditorium at Guilford College** (5800 West Friendly Ave., Greensboro, NC 27410). Tickets may be purchased for \$25 for reserved seating and \$19 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. Every Thursday and Friday this season is Family Night at EMF. Adults bringing children ages 12 and under are eligible for special prices –

adults \$5; children \$1 (limit 2 children per adult). Additionally, student tickets are available for \$8 to those with valid student IDs.

Thursday's concert will open with Shostakovich's Festive Overture for Orchestra in A major, op.96. This overture shows a more optimistic, punchy and lively side of the composer than any of his previous symphonic works. Moving in a fairly fast manner, the piece thrives rhythmically as if anxiously trying to reach a musical climax, using varied instrumental colors that give it the "festive" quality audiences thoroughly enjoy. Following in the evening program will be *Flute Moon* for flute harp, piano, percussion and strings, a unique work by composer Bright Sheng. Basically qualified as a flute concerto, this colorful piece reflects traditional western themes inspired on mythical beliefs and Chinese folklore. The performance will include the participation of prominent flutist and faculty member Les Roettges. The concert will conclude with Tchaikovsky's popular Symphony No. 5 in E minor, op.64. In all its romantic style, this work presents a more mellow and lyrical orchestral approach in comparison to his other symphonies. However, it still carries the symbolic allusions and abrupt changes in character distinctive of the composer.

On Friday evening, conductor José-Luis Novo will lead a contemporary program, beginning with Francis Poulenc's *Les biches* (The Does): Suite. This programmatic piece of music is derived from the original ballet, and encompasses Poulenc's Parisian style. The composer created the suite as a series of divertissements, each depicting particular situations taking place at a dinner. In an inimitable style, Poulenc incorporates traditional compositional traits with his own touch. The second portion of this concert consists of a rendition of Shostakovich's Symphony No. 5 in D minor, op.47. The victim of Russian political oppression, Dmitri Shostakovich certainly portrayed his frustration with the government in his music. This symphony makes constant references to political situations that affected his country and further influenced his compositional style. In its wild motion, triumphant character and grandiosity, Shostakovich accomplished a masterpiece that has transcended musical generations and barriers.

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 José Luis Novo

Praised by audiences and critics alike for his fresh interpretations and dramatic presentation style, pianist **José-Luis Novo** is currently music director and conductor of the Annapolis Symphony Orchestra (Md.) and the Binghamton Philharmonic (N.Y.). Prior to these appointments, Mr. Novo held the positions of assistant conductor of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra; music director of the Cincinnati Symphony Youth Orchestra, the Oxford Chamber Orchestra (Ohio), and the Miami University Symphony Orchestra; associate conductor of the National Repertory Orchestra; and assistant conductor of the National Youth Orchestra of Spain and the Yale Symphony Orchestra.

Recent engagements include the Baltimore, Syracuse, Modesto, Tulsa, Ridgefield, Tallahassee, and Stamford symphonies, the National Repertory Orchestra, the Cleveland Institute of Music Orchestra, and the Abilene Philharmonic.

Previous guest conducting engagements have included appearances with the Minnesota Orchestra, the Cincinnati Chamber Orchestra, the Windsor Symphony, the Cleveland Philharmonic, and the Echternach Festival Orchestra at the Kennedy Center. He has guest conducted on tour in Luxembourg and Germany and with numerous Spanish orchestras, including performances at the National Auditorium and at the Royal Opera House in Madrid, and the Palau de la Musica in Barcelona. Mr. Novo holds music degrees from the Cleveland Institute of Music, Yale University, and the Royal Conservatory of Music in Brussels. Mr. Novo returns for his tenth year as resident conductor of EMF.

More about Les Roettges

Les Roettges, principal flute of the Eastern Music Festival, has been principal flute of the Jacksonville Symphony Orchestra since 1986. A native of Ohio, Mr. Roettges became a student of The Cleveland Orchestra's Maurice Sharp at age 15. He holds a bachelor's degree from the New England Conservatory and a master's from The Juilliard School, and he studied for a year in Paris. His teachers include Paula Robison, Julius Baker, Alain Marion and Robert Stallman. Mr. Roettges was the winner of the first annual James Papoutsakis Memorial Flute Competition. He is a regular participant in the Amelia Island (Fla.) Chamber Festival, the Madison (Ga.) Festival, and the Saint Augustine (Fla.) Festival and has participated in the Colorado Music Festival, the Bowdoin (Maine) Chamber Music Festival, and the Los Angeles Philharmonic Institute. Before taking the position in Jacksonville, he performed as the principal flute for the Philharmonic Orchestra of Mexico City, Solisti New York, the Opera Ensemble of New York, Bel Canto Opera Company of New York, the Boston Philharmonic, and many other freelance orchestras in New York and Boston. This is his ninth season with EMF.

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 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, Horacio Gutiérrez, 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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