

PRELUDE

Official Newsletter of the ECSO



A Musical Conversation Between Leaders

Catherine Marrion
President

Toshiyuki Shimada
Music Director & Conductor

After watching the ECSO perform Leroy Anderson's *Sleigh Ride* on our YouTube channel during the holiday break, I wanted to connect with Toshi and get his sense of what the future of orchestras look like coming out of this pandemic. I virtually chatted with him about music, his life, and life after we all get a vaccine. Here are some highlights.

—Catherine

It's been a full year since we've seen the full orchestra together on stage. How are you feeling after being away for so long? This is so new. Shutting down for so long has never really happened before in the orchestra business. From the pandemic of 1918 to world wars, to stop completely performing on the stage was unthinkable just a year ago. But we didn't know as much as we do now. Listening to what scientists, like Dr. Fauci, are saying about the vaccinations, it looks like we will be able to fully go back into the concert hall by the fall and continue enriching people's lives through music. So I am hopeful.

We've been discussing string and outdoor concerts in the interim, what can you tell us? We are looking right now at the safety of our concerts – safety for our audience and the musicians. This is our concern right now. Some of our players will be some of the last to get a vaccine. Having string players seated far apart with masks is one way we can get back to playing music sooner. And there are a lot of great string pieces! From there, our next challenge will be to include more brass players and the chorus back into the hall.

Continued on page 2

This issue:

Musical Conversation
PAGE 01 & 02

Website Overhaul & State Grants
PAGE 03

Musicians of the Orchestra:
Kuljit Rehncy
PAGE 04

Board Member Highlight
PAGE 05 & 06

A Message from Caleb;
Sleigh Ride & Gala updates
PAGE 07

Photo Contributors: Caleb Bailey, Tom Bombria,
Dan Brandl



Toshi Interview Continued

I was happy to see many of our musicians perform last summer and fall at various venues. At Stonington Vineyards, there were 250 people enjoying the woodwind and brass concert, so it inspires me to continue developing a season for our loyal audience. Caleb Bailey and I have been in constant communication about how we can move ahead with concerts in the spring and outdoor summer concerts. Planning is very important, especially when we are talking about 20+ musicians.



Last year was your 10th season with the ECSO. As you look back, what do you miss the most and what were some of the highlights? I miss our amazingly talented musicians and performing for a live audience. We also have such a fantastic Board of Directors, dedicated volunteers, and staff, that I consider myself very lucky when I step up on the podium. I can't wait to continue the momentum we had last year. Over the past couple of seasons, we started to present new ideas of what an orchestra can do in various different places - Palmer Auditorium, Cathedral of St. Patrick, and Eastern Connecticut State University. It's been fun to conduct some rock and jazz band music alongside the great composers of our genre. And we'll continue to do that in the form of diverse programming. I look forward to exploring more ways of collaboration with all types of groups in the community.

Do you think this past year has changed the way the ECSO will interact with the community over the long term? Of course! We have a new way to present our music, which is virtually. The ECSO did a wonderful job of pivoting the education programs to a virtual "Music in the Homes" program that were free for schools to use. And our latest video, Sleigh Ride, was a lot of fun to make. Seeing all the musicians was like a big family reunion. Since we can't present our regular season, I'm excited to work on more videos like that. Not only does it bring some work to our talented musicians, but it's a way to make our music more accessible to the community. Also, I'm so thankful for all the contributions from our donors this year to make these virtual and outdoor programs happen. By supporting right now, they are guaranteeing the future of our orchestra.

Website Overhaul and Branding Updates Continue...

As the internet remains one of the best ways to inform our fans of what's going on during rapidly changing circumstances, we are thrilled to be close to sharing our new website with everyone. Currently, ECSO staff members are populating the new website from Miranda Creative with content carried over from our current website as well as lots of new things to explore, such as bios and info about our musicians.

The Norwich-based marketing, branding, and advertising company, Miranda Creative, has helped us revamp both our website and our new logo (pictured below). In addition to our envelope, business card, and digital updates, we are also revamping our office signage in New London, so be on the look out if you find yourself in the area!



"We are so excited to refresh our logo and to have a brand that encompasses all of our groups that make up the ECSO: the Friends of the Symphony, the Chorus, and the Youth Orchestra and String Ensemble."

CALEB BAILEY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

State of CT Grant Support Summary

In a normal year, the State of CT's Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) administers grants to many non-profits in the region to support our general operations and special projects. We have been able to make our free and reduced price concerts more accessible thanks to the recently added Arte Accessible grants.

This year especially, they have stepped up to provide the COVID Relief Fund for the Arts, which used matching funds from our generous donors for the period during which we could not perform as we usually do. We are so grateful for their recognition of how important it is to keep the arts sector thriving.

Arts Endowment Fund:	\$3,485
Supporting Arts in Place:	\$8,624
COVID Relief Fund for the Arts:	\$56,700





Musicians of the Orchestra: Kuljit Rehncy

Kuljit Rehncy is principal timpanist and recording engineer for the Eastern Connecticut Symphony Orchestra. Recently retired as Chief Musician and Recording Engineer for the U.S. Coast Guard Band, he has been a lecturer at various colleges in audio, acoustics, and percussion, and has performed with groups such as the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra and the Cleveland Orchestra. We sat down with him virtually on what would be his 20th season with the ECSO.

What have you done during this shutdown period? A LOT of yard work. And I've played a bunch of tennis (a great sport to be socially-distant). I also love to cook. And now that we've all been forced to do more home cooking, I know I still love it. Art and Food - the two things which bring humanity together.

Favorite ECSO Musical Memory: I have two. Performing Brahms' *Piano Concerto No. 1* with Peter Serkin. His sensitivity as a pianist was unbelievable! We were so fortunate to have him here in New London. The other was playing Nielsen's *Symphony No. 4*, "The Inextinguishable". Thank you, Toshi, for programming that!

You just finished editing the audio of *Sleigh Ride* for the ECSO YouTube page. How did you get into music and recording ensembles? I listened to a lot of funk and progressive rock bands as a kid In the late 70's & early 80's - who wouldn't want to be a drummer after hearing that kind of music? But my first day in Youth Orchestra as a high school student changed my life. As we rehearsed Tchaikovsky's *Romeo and Juliet*, *Fantasy-Overture*, I was awestruck by the sound of the orchestra. In college, as I trained to become a classical Timpanist, I also studied classical "acoustic" recording with engineers from Delos and later Telarc Records. After moving to CT to be the Recording Engineer for the Coast Guard Band, it was great to discover the ECSO. There are so many fantastic musicians in the group.

What don't people know about you? I'm on a quest to climb the highest mountain peak in each state - and I'm about half way there! (We'll see about Denali - ha ha!)

What can't you wait to do when we all get back to "normal"? Travel, travel, travel! My family is spread out across four continents. And as nice as FaceTime is, it's just not the same as being with each other.

"I play music partially for myself, but mostly for an audience. I miss that symbiotic relationship between the orchestra and the audience. I am hopeful that one day soon, everyone will be together again."

KULJIT REHNCY



Board Member Highlight

MICHAEL PERNAL, VICE PRESIDENT

Michael (Mike) Pernal has been a part of the ECSO volunteer family since 2013, serving as a board member of the Friends of the ECSO and chairing the Instrumental Competition Committee. After earning a Ph.D. in Professional Higher Education Administration in 1975, Mike rose through the ranks at Eastern Connecticut State University to become its Executive Vice President, a post he held for 14 years until his retirement in 2013. In 2006 he also served as acting President. As administrator for the day-to-day operations at the University, Mike coordinated most University fundraising efforts for charitable organizations including the state employees' campaign, American Cancer Society, and Relay for Life. Mike has had a long career of community and volunteer involvement since first becoming President of the Windham Swim Club in 1981. A list too long to fit, Mike has been a board member of the Greater Willimantic Chamber of Commerce, Greater Windham Area United Way, March of Dimes WalkAmerica, and Avalonia Land Trust among others. He is currently a volunteer at the Pawcatuck Neighborhood Center, and most recently for the Ocean Community YMCA Naik Family Branch Board of Managers. Mike along with his wife, Maureen, lives in Mystic.

"I have no music ability that I know of. In fact, upon learning of my love of classical music, someone asked me what instrument I played. My response, "the CD player!"

MICHAEL PERNAL

Your first musical memory: My first association with music occurred in the 7th grade. I had a marvelous teacher who decided one day to play a piece of music while we were taking a big exam. He selected the third movement from Tchaikovsky's 6th which made it near impossible to concentrate on the exam questions. I bought the LP as soon as my allowance money came through.

How did you get involved with the ECSO? My wife and I moved to Mystic in 2008, and were thrilled to learn that the Coast Guard Band gave free concerts and that the ECSO had a subscription concert series. I wasn't sure what to expect and was pleasantly surprised at my first concert. I believe the augmented brass that included Coast Guard Band members during Janáček's *Sinfonietta* helped sway my first impression. Needless to say, the quality of the orchestra seemed and seems to grow with each concert, and Toshi has made an enormous difference. As soon as possible, I sought a way to volunteer and ended up with the Friends - a wonderful group of people.

Continued on the next page





The ECSO had plans to perform in the Willimantic area for a number of years, but it was you who reinvigorated the idea and made it possible with your connections at Eastern Connecticut State University. How/Why did you want to bring the ECSO to ECSU?

A number of years ago, ECSU constructed a state of the art fine arts building after years of trying to convince the state of its necessity. I was on the committee that worked on its early planning and was pleased to see its opening after I had retired. Having previously brought Coast Guard Band members to perform at the University, when I joined the ECSO Board (also wonderful people), I began to think of a way to consider smaller chamber performances involving the ECSO. To my surprise last season, I learned that Toshi had programmed Beethoven's *Symphony No. 7* and Mozart's *Concerto for Flute and Harp*, works that could be staged in ECSU's fine arts building using a classical sized orchestra. When I learned that the ECSO was interested in expanding our market to include the Willimantic area, I was happy to arrange a meeting with ECSU administrators.

After the success of the "sold out" free performance in February 2020, I spoke with Ed Osborn, ECSU's Public Affairs Director about the possibility of doing more concerts in a similar manner. They are definitely interested. For my part, I would also be interested in the possibility of using ECSO musicians as masterclass guest instructors for university students to continue the education part of our mission. I am hopeful for the future collaborations between our two organizations.

What do you enjoy most about an ECSO concert? Nothing can take the place of live music executed by talented professional musicians. I have been a subscriber since 2008 and look forward to each concert, particularly with Toshi's imaginative programming. I applaud his introduction of modern pieces and works by women composers since it has afforded me an opportunity to become acquainted with unfamiliar works and composers. I can't wait to enjoy a performance by the ECSO in a concert hall again.



A Message from Caleb Bailey, ECSO Executive Director

Since the pandemic has stretched on longer than any of us anticipated, we have continued to adjust our way of doing things to bring music to our community. In case you missed it, be sure to visit our YouTube channel at youtube.com/ects-symphony to view our at-home performances of Leroy Anderson's *Sleigh Ride*.

Between Toshi and our musicians creating their videos, Kuljit Rehncy (our timpanist and audio engineer) editing the audio, and Carl Franklin putting the videos from each person together into one product, I was so inspired to see it come together so quickly to debut on Christmas Day. The State's COVID relief funds helped us to be able to take on this project and we hope to continue to offer virtual performances until it's safe to gather in person, or outdoors when it's more seasonable.

Above all, we could not have done any of our adjusted activities without **YOUR support**. Whether you donate, subscribe, share our content on social media, or attend outdoor and virtual concerts (or all of these!), you have helped support our organization to ensure that we'll be ready to come back at full force when the time is right. On behalf of the ECSO, we cannot thank you enough for your dedication.



Save the Date for our outdoor Gala: Friday, June 25th Stonington Vineyards

We are so excited to announce our return to one of our new favorite venues to perform outside - Stonington Vineyards! Join us for our Gala, safely distanced and outdoors, re-imagined as a relaxed summer concert with Toshi and ECSO musicians.

There will be a silent auction once more, accessible from your smartphone, tablet, or computer and will be available for bidding in the weeks leading up to our event at the Vineyard.

Along with the Hygienic Art Park, Olde Mistick Village, Florence Griswold Museum, and Harris Building, Stonington Vineyards became one of our new partners as we found ways to perform music in smaller ensembles as part of the Soundscape Concert Series. If you joined us last Fall for the amazing concert featuring ECSO brass and woodwinds, you know how special it is to hear our music in the great outdoors with good food, company, and wine. If you didn't, you're getting the chance once more - stay tuned for more info and an invitation to arrive in your mailbox shortly!

-Caleb



Eastern Connecticut Symphony Orchestra

Toshiyuki Shimada
Music Director & Conductor

289 State St. New London, CT 06320

NON PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT NO. 284
NEW LONDON, CT
06320

