Illinois Wesleyan University
School of Music presents

Illinois Wesleyan Symphony Orchestra

Sey Ahn, Music Director and Conductor

Friday, October 23, 2020
7:30PM
Westbrook Auditorium
Presser Hall
Illinois Wesleyan Symphony Orchestra

Finalist in the American Prize in Orchestral Performance 2016/17, the IWSO was founded in 1984 and is made up of students from music and non-music disciplines who have performed with many esteemed guest soloists.

The ensemble has performed alongside various eminent musical personalities, including virtuoso string bassist Edgar Meyer and Grammy Award-Winning soprano Dawn Upshaw, who is also an Illinois Wesleyan alumna, and many others. Other distinguished guests that the ensemble has hosted throughout its tenure include Armando Ghitalla, Roger Roloff, and Laszlo Varga. In addition, IWSO has played in concert with the Volgograd Philharmonic Chamber Orchestra under the direction of Mr. Edward Serov and Peter Schickele. The Orchestra has performed on CBS’s Sunday Morning and participated in frequent tours throughout the United States.

The annual Concerto-Aria concert showcases the school’s finest musicians by allowing them the opportunity to perform with the IWSO.
Sey Ahn

A 2015 fellow of the American Academy of Conducting at the Aspen Music Festival, Sey Ahn is currently the Director of Symphony Orchestra and Wind Ensemble at Illinois Wesleyan University. Ahn has served as the Guest Conductor in Residence at Diamond Bar High School for over ten years, whose Symphony Orchestra has won numerous national accolades. Ahn is a frequent Evaluator and Clinician at the annual Music for All Festival held in Indianapolis. She has also been the Assistant Conductor of the Music for All Honor Orchestra of America since 2012. Ahn previously held the position of Music Director and Professor of Conducting at the University of California Santa Barbara. Ahn has worked extensively with young musicians in many youth orchestras around the country. She has been invited as a guest conductor of All-State Festivals in states such as Missouri, Louisiana, Kansas, Colorado, Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, Tennessee, Iowa, and Kentucky. Ahn has led orchestral performances in Walt Disney Concert Hall and Royce Hall in Los Angeles, Benedict Music Tent in Aspen, Hilbert Theater in Indianapolis and Alice Tully Hall in New York.

Sey Ahn earned a Bachelor of Music degree in piano performance from Northwestern University, where she studied piano with Alan Chow and James Giles, and started her conducting studies with Victor Yampolsky. She earned two Master of Music degrees, in piano and orchestral conducting, from the University of Southern California, where she studied piano with Norman Krieger, and conducting with Larry Livingston. She earned a Doctorate in orchestral conducting at the University of Kentucky, where she studied with John Nardolillo, and served as Assistant Conductor to the University of Kentucky Symphony Orchestra and University of Kentucky Opera Theatre.
**Program**

*Simple Symphony*  
Benjamin Britten  
(1913-1976)

*Adagio For Strings*  
Samuel Barber  
(1910-1981)

*Holberg Suite*  
Edward Grieg  
(1843-1907)
Program Notes

Duration: 20 minutes

Simple Symphony

Benjamin Britten

Completed by the time he turned twenty and first performed in 1934, the symphony for string orchestra is as Britten notes ‘entirely based on material from works which the composer wrote between the ages of twelve and nine.’ The work is dedicated to his childhood viola teacher, Audrey Alston, who introduced him to Frank Bridge, the dedicatee of his next string orchestra work some three years later.

Once the tonality of the Boisterous Bourrée is beyond doubt following the opening repeated cadential figure, Britten begins a spirited and baroque-like exploration of counterpoint upon a theme in D minor from his first Suite for piano (1926). A sweeter second subject in the relative major key follows and then a yet more inventive development of the first material ensues.

Its title really tells us all about the second movement. To be played ‘presto possible pizzicato sempre’ (as fast as possible, always pizzicato), its primary section is taken from a Scherzo for piano (1924).

Almost as long as the other movements combined, the Sentimental Saraband is the heart of the work and returns us to the baroque mode of the Bourrée with a pedal G underpinning an aching melody from Britten’s Suite No. 3 for piano (1925).

Two early piano sonatas provide material for the Frolicsome Finale. Though it shares much with the Bourrée in terms of design, Britten brings to it the exuberance of the second movement to make for an especially thrilling close.

(1)Note by Luke Lewis, edited by Meghan Griffin)

Duration: 18 minutes

Adagio for Strings

Samuel Barber

In 1936 Barber composed his String Quartet, Op. 11. In response to a request from conductor Toscanini, the 27-year-old submitted a string orchestra arrangement of the Adagio, taken from the 3-movement quartet. The Adagio for Strings received its premiere in a concert by the newly formed NBC Symphony led by Toscanini; its premiere reached a far larger audience than ever possible in a usual concert setting.

The powerfully spiritual Adagio for Strings is thought to embody feelings of profound loss and grief. It was played at the funerals of Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Albert Einstein, it was broadcast to the nation when John F. Kennedy was assassinated, and it was played by orchestras around the globe in the wake of the 9/11 tragedies.

This work has remained a fixture of the American classical canon since it was first heard. Barber accomplishes this gripping, pathos-dripping
work with simple, familiar elements. The entire piece develops from a stepwise melodic motif stated at the beginning. The music progressively builds in intensity through an increase in volume and textural density as it ascends through the register of the strings. There is a wrenching climax before the piece breaks off into a numbed, throbbing silence, followed by a gentle reprise of the original motif.

(Note by Steven Errante, edited by Meghan Griffin)
Duration: 9 minutes

Holberg Suite
Edward Grieg

Grieg composed his Holberg Suite—properly known as Fra Holbergs Tid (From Holberg’s Time)—in 1884. The Holberg Suite was originally composed for piano; Grieg scored the suite for string orchestra the following year. Subtitled “Suite in the Olden Style,” the work draws on eighteenth-century dance forms that the composer supposed would have been familiar to Holberg.

The opening Praeludium, a bright, open-armed overture, impresses with its textural clarity and expert handling of string sonorities. Grieg voices full ensemble chords with a masterful touch, achieving limpid delicacy here, majestic splendor a moment later.

The second movement is a sarabande, originally a Spanish dance form that typically served as the slow movement. Grieg’s Sarabande is accordingly poignant. A brief passage midway through the movement, scored for three solo celli and accompanied by solo bass pizzicato, is as piercing as it is ephemeral.

A sprightly gavotte, a courtly French dance, follows. The fourth movement Air, given the tempo marking andante religioso, begins with a mournful arioso. Its middle section again deploys solo cello to heartrending effect, in amorous dialogue with the full ensemble.

The final movement takes the form of a rigaudon, a French folk dance, and Grieg’s finale is accordingly brimming with folk character. Solo violin and viola kick things off with country fiddling fit for a hoedown. A slower middle section interrupts the fête only briefly before a reprise of the opening festivities.

(Note by Patrick Castillo, edited by Meghan Griffin)
Personnel

**VIOLIN I**
- Oliwia Cieslak
- Daria Dodonova*
- Caleb Kosinski
- Barb Lemmon+

**VIOLIN II**
- Jazalyn Belz
- Michelle Lu
- Itzel Mendoza
- Fred Moore+
- Ethan Schuller*
- Noelle Simms+

**VIOLA**
- Isaiah Crews
- Ella Escobedo+
- Robin Hurst
- Monique Isom*

**CELLO**
- Jordan Bach
- Kira Gurovich*
- Kathryn Jefferson
- Mars Mulvin

**BASS**
- Meghan Griffin*
- John Lovingood
- Jasil Olabode

*indicates principal
+ indicates community member
Upcoming Concerts and Recitals

October
25 Student Composition Concert; 7:30; virtual

November
6 Wind Ensemble & Symphonic Winds Concert; 7:30; virtual
12 General Recital; 4:00pm; virtual
13 Fall Choral Concert; 7:30pm; virtual

Link to performances available at www.iwu.edu/music/events

Thank you for joining us for this performance!
Ensemble Staff
Meghan Griffin, Librarian

For more information about the Illinois Wesleyan Symphony Orchestra, email iwso@iwu.edu.