

# Overture

*Newsletter of the Symphony Orchestra Guild of Decatur*



**Young Artist Winners**  
*Leon Lewis-Nicol, Sarah Obert  
and Trevor Stout, featured page 6*

*Photo credit: Greg Fombelle*

## **MASTERWORKS III**

**Elgar's Enigma Variations and Young Artists**  
*Saturday, February 2, 2019 | Kirkland Fine Arts Center*

# WELCOME

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Happy New Year!

Thanks to the loyal supporters of the Symphony Orchestra Guild of Decatur, 2018 was a very successful year. We were able to reach our goals and expand our support of music in the community.

The *Sleigh Bells Ring Holiday Gala* held on November 30th was our final event of the 2018 calendar year. This fundraiser succeeded because of the hard work, creativity and dedication of businesses and volunteers who donated time, financial backing and items for the auction.

This year, several people attended the annual Gala for the first time. We welcome the participation of new people and we continue to be grateful for the generous support of long-time members. Their sponsorship has been the reason for the Symphony Guild's success during the past forty-four years.

As many of you know, the Symphony Orchestra Guild of Decatur exists to provide encouragement and backing for the Millikin Decatur Symphony Orchestra directed by Dr. Sergey Bogza and the Youth



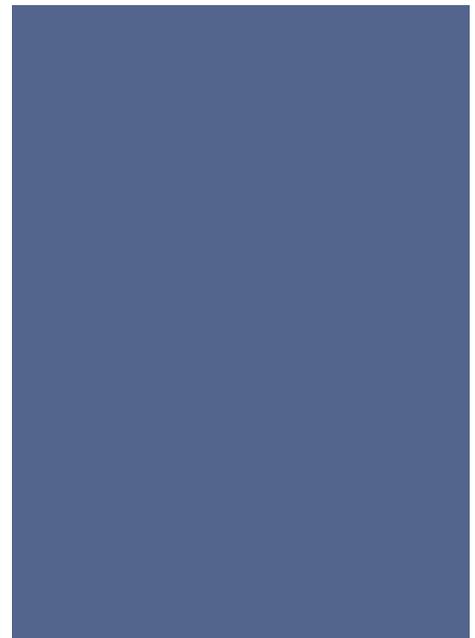
Symphony directed by Dr. Neil Smith. In addition, the Symphony Guild offers scholarships to music students in middle school and high school. Young students are introduced to musical instruments played by professional musicians who are a part of the Guild's "Music in Our Schools" program and the "Petting Zoo." The Symphony Orchestra Guild also offers grants to adults in organizations completing applications for partial financial assistance to sponsor programs presented by professional instrumental musicians.

Thanks to the success of the recent Holiday Gala and other fundraising projects, the Symphony Guild will be able to continue with its support of a wide array of musical activities. The New Year, 2019, holds the promise of many new musical experiences for both the adults and the young people in our community.

Sincerely,

**Linda Arends**

*President,  
Symphony Orchestra Guild of  
Decatur*



# FROM THE CONDUCTOR



Every year, Millikin-Decatur Symphony Orchestra hosts a Young Artist Concerto/Aria Competition. The experience aims to provide undergraduate students with an opportunity to be a guest soloist with a full symphony orchestra.

It is particularly gratifying for me to witness students embracing this challenge and explore the meaning of what it means to be a soloist. Aside from exemplary musicianship and ability to project in a 1700-seat hall, the students are asked to prepare professional promotional material, give a pre-concert lecture and interviews, and appear on local television and radio stations to promote the concert. It is invaluable to have these experiences at an early stage of one's career.

The orchestra and I are so delighted to work with soprano Sarah Obert [student of Dr. Justin John Moniz], trumpeter Trevor Stout [student of Dr. Randy Raymond], and pianist Leon Lewis-Nicol [student of Dr. Silvan Negrutiu]. Their respective repertoire makes for a diverse program spanning nearly 200 years! I trust you will join me in congratulating them and support

them as they make their solo debut with the Millikin-Decatur Symphony Orchestra.

In the second half of the program, the orchestra will perform one of Edward Elgar's most beloved work, *Variations on an Original Theme*, popularly known as *Enigma Variations*. Written in 1899, the work is comprised of 14 variations, with each variation being a musical sketch of one of his close acquaintances.

*The sketches are not 'portraits' but each variation contains a distinct idea founded on some particular personality or perhaps on some incident known only to two people. This is the basis of the composition, but the work may be listened to as a 'piece of music' apart from any extraneous consideration.*

*Edward Elgar*

This piece has a special place in my heart – it is one of the first pieces I heard performed live by an orchestra. The variety of color, character, and a rousing finale makes for an enjoyable night at the symphony!

See you at the Symphony,

**Dr. Sergey Bogza**

*Music Director  
and Conductor*

2018/2019 season

# ELGAR'S ENIGMA

## Variations on an Original Theme, Op. 36

By Dr. Katherine Leo

Assistant Professor of Music  
Musicology Coordinator

How do we imagine those closest to us? Like a familiar scent, sounds of shared laughter or the cadence of footsteps can be some of our most precious memories. These melodies and rhythms enrich the music of our everyday lives, a soundscape into which British composer Sir Edward William Elgar (1857-1934) delved for his *Variations on an Original Theme, Op. 36*, affectionally known as the “Enigma Variations.”

On October 21, 1898, Elgar's wife—a keen musician herself—noticed a melody her husband was working out on the piano. Their conversation led to an improvisatory evening adapting that melody to represent some of the people closest to them. The resulting composition, a theme and variations scored for orchestra, was completed in February the following year, dedicated “to my friends pictured within.” As Elgar later explained in his own program notes:

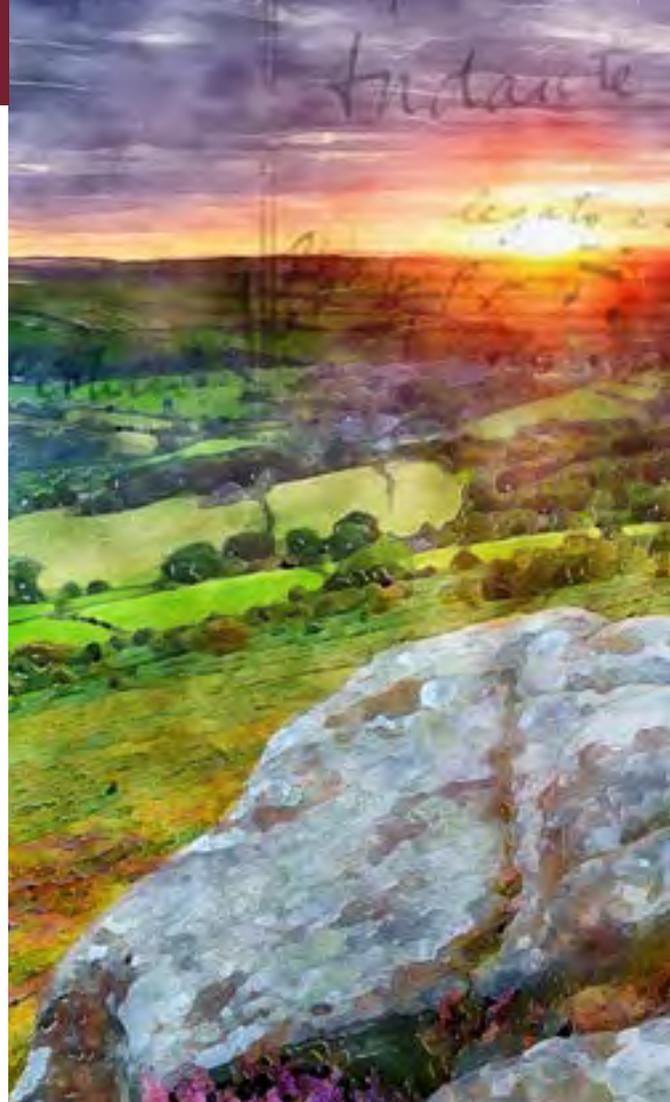
*This work, commenced in a spirit of humour & continued in deep seriousness, contains sketches of the composer's friends. It may be understood that these personages comment or reflect on the original theme & each one attempts a solution of the Enigma, for so the theme is called.*

In the completed score, each variation is labeled with initials or a name to identify the person depicted. The relationships range from Elgar's wife, to his colleagues, students, and his circle of friends:

**Variation I, “C.A.E.”:** Caroline Alice Elgar, the composer's wife. The melody is supposedly a romantic adaptation of one Elgar frequently whistled as he arrived home each day.

**Variation II, “H.D.S.-P.”** Hew D. Steuart-Powell, pianist in Elgar's trio and close friends with Basil G. Nevinson, who is featured in Variation XII.

**Variation III, “R.B.T.”:** Richard Baxter Townshend, author of *A Tenderfoot* in Colorado.



**Variation IV, “W.M.B.”:** William Meath Baker, the composer's friend.

**Variation V, “R.P.A.”:** Richard P. Arnold, son of the poet Matthew Arnold.

**Variation VI, “Ysobel”:** Isabel Fitton, a struggling viola student. Elgar allegedly explained that the main phrase for this variation was based on a string-crossing exercise.

**Variation VII, “Troyte”:** Architect and dear friend Arthur Troyte Griffith, depicted here as an enthusiastic, although struggling, piano student. The variation might also refer to their shared experience being caught in a thunderstorm.

**Variation VIII, “W.N.”:** Winifred Norbury, a secretary of the Worcester Philharmonic Society with a gracious personality and charming laugh. Some have suggested this variation also depicts her beautiful home.

**Variation IX “Nimrod”:** August Jaeger, Elgar's publisher and close friend. “Jaeger” is German



for “hunter,” and Nimrod is one of the Old Testament’s fiercest hunters. According to Dora Penny, featured in the following variation, ‘Nimrod’ is less about Jaeger than a conversation between Jaeger and Elgar about Beethoven.

**Variation X, “Dorabella—Intermezzo”:** Dora Penny, step-niece to William Meath Baker, of Variation IV, and sister-in-law Richard B. Townshend, of Variation III.

**Variation XI, “G.R.S.”:** Dr. G.R. Sinclair, organist at Hereford Cathedral who owned a bulldog, named Dan, for whom this variation is based.

**Variation XII, “B.G.N.”:** Basil G. Nevinson, the cellist in Elgar’s trio.

**Variation XIII, “\*\*\*Romanza”:** Lady Mary Lygon. It is unclear why Elgar used three asterisks, but it may be due to superstition surrounding the number ‘13’ or Lady Lygon’s then-local fame.

**Variation XIV, “E.D.U.”:** Alice’s nickname for her husband. This variation references Variations I and IX as Elgar’s “two greatest influences.”

Elgar excluded variations for other colleagues, including composers Arthur Sullivan and Hubert Parry, allegedly because his own attempts to mimic their styles seemed to fall short. The present variations nevertheless display a variety of compositional techniques, at times delicate and sentimental while at others bold and theatrical.

Over one hundred years later, listeners still ponder the meaning of Elgar’s ‘Enigma.’ To whom, or what, might it refer? This question has sparked lively conversations, even inspiring a 1953 contest in the Saturday Evening Review for readers to identify it. Many have suggested that the enigma is a hidden melody, while some have proposed that Elgar drew inspiration from British songs, such as “Auld Lang Syne.” Others consider the enigma to be more abstract, referring to friendship as a unifying, yet ‘unplayed,’ theme, or to a more obscure literary reference. Perhaps it is Elgar inviting us to reflect on the people that enliven our own everyday symphonies.

*Like a familiar scent, sounds of shared laughter or the cadence of footsteps can be some of our most precious memories.*

# ABOUT THE COVER

Leon Lewis-Nicol, Sarah Obert and Trevor Stout

The MDSO Annual Concerto and Aria Competition has been an honored tradition within the School of Music for many years. Each fall, students participate in this highly competitive program that highlights their work as musical soloists. This year's winners Sarah Obert, Leon Lewis-Nicol and Trevor Stout will perform as soloists with the MDSO February 2nd during the **Masterworks III, Elgar's Enigma Variations and Young Artists** performance.

Rising soprano **Sarah Obert** made her Millikin University mainstage debut as Christine Daae in *The Phantom of the Opera*. Following

this triumphant success, she took on the role of Mother Superior in *Sister Act*. Additional credits include: Elle Woods in *Legally Blonde* (Limelight Theatre Productions), Janet van de Graaf in *The Drowsy Chaperone* (Limelight Theatre Productions), and the title role in *Mary Poppins* (Starlight Theatre). Sarah was recently awarded second place in 2018 National Association of Teacher of Singing (NATS) Central Region Competition—Lower Classical Women's Division and qualifies to advance to the national finals this June. Sarah is currently a sophomore pursuing a B.F.A. in Musical Theatre in the studio of Dr. Justin John Moniz.

A native of Sierra Leone, **Leon Lewis-Nicol** studies piano with Dr. Silvan Negrutiu at Millikin University, where he is pursuing a commercial music degree. Prior to enrolling at Millikin in August 2017, he attended Parkland College for one year and took piano lessons with prof. Vincent Trauth, following his pre-college education in Sierra Leone and Ghana

as a self-taught musician. Leon is an aspiring commercial composer and professional pianist and has dreams of returning to Sierra Leone to establish a community music school upon completing his musical training in the United States.

**Trevor Stout** is a senior Trumpet Performance major from Decatur, Illinois. A graduate of Eisenhower High School, Trevor is involved in many ensembles at Millikin, including Jazz Band, Wind Ensemble, Jazz Combo, and the Millikin Decatur Symphony Orchestra. He is an active performer in the Central Illinois area, most notably as a pit musician for The Little Theatre on the Square in Sullivan, Illinois. Additionally, Trevor is a member of Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia, in which he served as Fraternity Education Officer. Trevor is the trumpet student of Randall Reyman.

For interviews and more photos of the Young Artist Winners visit [decaturorchestra.com](http://decaturorchestra.com)



## JOIN US

Please consider joining the membership of the **Symphony Orchestra Guild of Decatur**. Membership in the Guild supports the Millikin-Decatur Symphony Orchestra, the Decatur Youth Orchestra, and music in Decatur schools.

### Guild membership allows us to:

- Present affordable Masterworks and other concerts for the community
- Support the careers of working musicians
- Deliver music education to hundreds of students
- Provide financial aid to students
- Be cultural leaders in the community and make Decatur a wonderful place to live

### Guild members enjoy:

- Season tickets for the Masterworks I-V series
- Priority Seating
- Priority Ticket Access
- Free shuttle service to Kirkland ticketed events
- Invitations to all social events

### CHOOSE YOUR MEMBERSHIP LEVEL:

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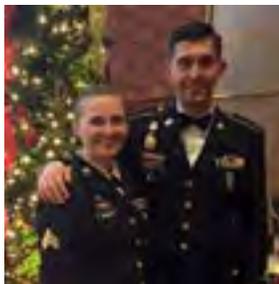
**The Symphony Orchestra Guild of Decatur**

Mail to: **Symphony Orchestra Guild**, c/o 651 W. Karen Ct., Decatur IL 62526

Your donation is tax deductible within the fullest extent of the law.

# EDUCATION

## DYSO Alumni Spotlight Hannah Smicker



**Hannah  
(Rademacher)  
and  
Andrew Smicker**

DYSO was my first exposure and experience with playing in the orchestra from 2001-2005. MacArthur High School didn't have an orchestra program that included wind instruments, so without DYSO I wouldn't have had any opportunities to play in an orchestra. This helped me to expand my musical knowledge as a horn player and pursue more opportunities to participate in orchestral playing.

Music has been a major part of my life since I began piano lessons when I was six. I took music lessons through Millikin's prep department on piano, trumpet and horn. I was able to participate and develop my musical abilities at Dennis Elementary, Roosevelt/Stephen Decatur Middle School and MacArthur High School under the direction of Jim Culbertson and Steve Schepper. I also spent a few summers of my high school years

attending various summer music camps around the country, including Interlochen in Michigan and Wyoming Seminary for the Arts in Pennsylvania.

Currently I am serving in the US Army as a horn player in the band field. I've had the opportunity to travel across the country and several countries overseas playing music. I've had the opportunity to perform with musicians in South Korea through my military experience and for thousands of people. I currently work at the Army School of Music, which is a selection-based process to bring the best musicians in the field to work and train the Army band field. I was able to attend Butler University due to receiving a scholarship that covered half of my tuition because of my musical abilities.

My early musical opportunities helped me to have exposure to all kinds of music instead of just one musical experience of playing in only my school's music program. I was able to connect with other musicians in the community and build relationships outside of my immediate circle. It helped to build my passion for music and realize that I wanted to pursue a career in music, however I could make it work. My teachers helped me to prepare for my audition for the Army band field when I decided to join the military. They are relationships I've been able to maintain and turn to when I may need direction and help with my musical performances and auditions.

## DYSO 2018 Highlights



Photo credit: Greg Fombelle

Congratulations to this year's Concerto winners **Miruna Eynon** (cello) and **Maleka Hames** (clarinet). Winners were judged by Dr. Bogza and will perform with the orchestra in the spring.

This year DYSO has 49 students representing 17 area schools, exchange students, homeschooled musicians. Of the 46 musicians who played in the November concert, 18 are SOGD scholarship winners, including the concertmaster and eight principal chairs.

## DYSO Orchestra Staff

**Neal Smith**, *Music Director*

**Lyn Sly**, *Executive Manager*

**Walter Jackson** (*former DYSO member*) and **Val Chavez-Roncal**,  
*Student Managers*

**Amy Catron**, *Chamber Coach*

**Aaron Villarreal**, *Percussion Coach*

**Abi Magrath**, **Riley McDorman**,  
and **Matthew Polett**, *Millikin  
Education Teaching Assistants*

## DYSO Scholarship Auditions

Auditions for the 2019-20 Symphony Guild scholarships are scheduled for Sunday, March 3, 2019 in Kaeuper Hall on the Millikin University campus.

Visit [decaturorchestra.com](http://decaturorchestra.com) for an application and full details.

## DYSO Performance Calendar

**Feb 8** *St. Louis Symphony  
Brahms Second  
Symphony*

**March 15, 16 and 17**  
*"Beauty and the Beast"  
with Decatur Park  
District "Perform"  
Production, Decatur  
Civic Center*

**April 9** *PASS Concert with  
"Perform" students,  
Kirkland Fine  
Arts Center*

**April 14** *Spring Concert,  
Kirkland Fine  
Arts Center*



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## UPCOMING PERFORMANCES AND EVENTS

**FEB** **Masterworks III, Elgar's Enigma Variations and Young Artists**  
Saturday, February 2, 7:30 pm | Kirkland Fine Arts Center

**MAR** **Masterworks IV, Resurrection Symphony: Mahler's Symphony No. 2**  
Saturday, March 2, 7:30 pm | Kirkland Fine Arts Center

**Sleeping Beauty with Alabama Ballet, Millikin Chamber Orchestra**  
Saturday, March 30  
Sunday, March 31 | Kirkland Fine Arts Center

**APR** **Masterworks V, Dvorak's New World Symphony and Amy Catron**  
Saturday, April 13, 7:30 pm | Kirkland Fine Arts Center

### Single tickets

Kirkland Fine Arts Center Box Office | 217.424.6318

### Guild events, & Membership information

Symphony Orchestra Guild of Decatur | 217.877.2963

Visit [decaturorchestra.com](http://decaturorchestra.com) for more information.

### Free Shuttle Service to Kirkland Events

SOGD has made arrangements with Baldwin Shuttle to provide free round-trip shuttle service to seniors who would like to attend ticketed events at Kirkland. Call Baldwin Shuttle at 1-800-747-3593 to reserve your seat on the mini-bus. Baldwin will pick you up at your front door, and bring you to the front patio at Kirkland so you can catch your favorite shows.

Photo credits: Greg Fombelle: Cover, page 7

## PRE-CONCERT TALKS SERIES

One hour prior to each Masterworks performance, concert goers are invited to attend informal pre-concert conversations to guide you through the music you are about to hear, providing an enlightening look at the repertoire and composers. Held in Kirkland's lower lobby. Hosted by Dr. Sergey Bogza.

## AFTERGLOW

Mingle with Guild members and Dr. Sergey Bogza after each MDSO performance at Bizou, located at 259 N. Main St., Decatur, for appetizers, desserts, and wine.