

# The Boston Globe

## NEC orchestra eager for Symphony Hall stage

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Next Wednesday, an orchestra from New England Conservatory will take the Symphony Hall stage for the first time in 15 years. The NEC Philharmonia, the school's most prominent student orchestra, will offer a program of music by Barber, Schumann, and Shostakovich on a larger and more public stage than it usually inhabits. Conductor Hugh Wolff, NEC's director of orchestras, says there's a sense of anticipation that isn't limited just to the players.

"I can tell you that [the students'] level of excitement has gone up," says Wolff by phone from Dresden, Germany, during a guest conducting stint. "In a sense, the whole school feels a certain stake in the event, and pride in the fact that it's happening."

Wolff assembled the program as "a snapshot of what the school is trying to do."

Barber's "Adagio for Strings" is a nod not only to the Barber centenary but also to what Wolff calls, "perhaps one of the less-known aspects of NEC: the quality of the string enrollment, due in large measure to the extraordinary string faculty. So I wanted a little piece that would showcase them."

Schumann's Cello Concerto will feature soloist Narek Hakhnazaryan, 21, who's already attracting notice at a national level. He's one of the few students enrolled in the school's elite Artist Diploma program, for students that "we believe are really on the verge of a major solo career."

The evening's big work is Shostakovich's Tenth Symphony, a piece that every student with aspirations to an orchestra career needs to know. But its inclusion also says something about the ongoing evolution of orchestral repertoire. Wolff says that he had little love for Shostakovich's music when he was a young composition student; it took a six-year conducting apprenticeship with the late Mstislav Rostropovich to open his eyes to its power.

"And now I find that kids my students' age and my son's age respond to Shostakovich in a visceral way that my generation didn't," he says. "It speaks to them, kind of the way, when we

were young, Mahler was the next new rage being rediscovered, and it spoke directly to what we felt. Getting them to understand what the music means is a terrific and wonderful journey together.’’

*Co-presented by Celebrity Series of Boston; [necmusic.edu/nec-philharmonia-symphony-hall](http://necmusic.edu/nec-philharmonia-symphony-hall)*

### **Chiara benefit concert**

The Chiara String Quartet warms up for the latest iteration in its Beethoven cycle with a concert to benefit the victims of recent earthquakes. Tonight’s Good Friday concert, at Trinity Church in Copley Square, consists of a single, seasonally appropriate work: Haydn’s “Seven Last Words of Christ on the Cross,” whose movements will be interspersed with readings from the Passion story. The concert is free, but a free-will offering will be collected and donated to Episcopal Relief and Development for the benefit of victims of the earthquakes in Haiti and Chile.

Next Friday, the Chiara continues its Beethoven cycle at Harvard’s Paine Hall with the quartets in F (Op. 18 No. 1), F minor (Op. 95, the “Serioso” quartet), and E-flat (Op. 127).

[www.chiaraquartet.net](http://www.chiaraquartet.net)

### **Callithumpians on CD**

The Callithumpian Consort and its music director, Stephen Drury, are featured on a CD of music by Xenakis just out from Mode Records. The 11th in Mode’s ongoing Xenakis Edition, the CD includes four works with piano; Aki Takahashi is the virtuosic pianist on all of them. Various Callithumpians are featured on “Eonta” for piano, two trumpets, and three trombones, and “Morsima — Amorsima” for piano, violin, cello, and bass. The CD also includes a piano quintet, “Akea,” featuring the JACK Quartet, whose recordings of all the Xenakis string quartets on Mode was a highlight of last year’s CD releases.

Xenakis’s works can be on the astringent side for some listeners. Nevertheless, advice about how to listen to his music is printed right on the CD: “PLAY LOUD.”