



For Immediate Release

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## **Soprano Nicole Heaston, Composer and Violinist Jessie Montgomery to take part in Elgin Symphony Orchestra's Listeners Club discussion series**

*Four free discussions lead up to Nicole Heaston's Feb. 25 God & Love performance on WFMT 98.7 FM*

**February 4, 2021 – (Elgin, IL)** – The Elgin Symphony Orchestra (ESO) invites classical music aficionados and those who would like to learn more about this musical genre to join them in a free, four-part online series in February. The ESO Listeners Club will feature live-streamed discussions with notable contemporary vocalists, composers, and musicians to discuss the historic and contemporary musical works to be featured in **soprano Nicole Heaston's God & Love concert**. The concert, featuring Elgin Symphony Orchestra principal players and co-presented by the Ravinia Festival, will be aired on **WMFT 98.7 FM on Thursday, Feb. 25 at 8 p.m. CST** and streamed through the WFMT app and at wfmt.com. The concert was recorded at Ravinia's Bennett Gordon Hall, and features works by Frans Liszt, Franz Schubert, George Frederick Handel, Jessie Montgomery and Henry Purcell.

To enrich the performance, the Listeners Club will highlight a different aspect of the concert each week in its live, online discussions. **To take part, simply tune in on the ESO Facebook page, [www.facebook.com/ElginSymphonyOrchestra](https://www.facebook.com/ElginSymphonyOrchestra), at the appointed time, or to participate via Zoom, register at [www.elginsymphony.org/listeners-sign-up/](https://www.elginsymphony.org/listeners-sign-up/).**

*The series includes the following discussions:*

**Monday, February 8, 2021 at 7:00 PM**

**Kyle Masson discusses "George Frederic Handel — More than just The Messiah!"**

George Frederic Handel may be most known for The Messiah, but he didn't start composing English choral works until mid-way through his career. Join **Kyle Masson**, Ph.D. candidate in Historical Musicology at Princeton University, for a discussion of Handel's evolution from his early days composing Italian opera to his success with English oratorios. An active performer himself, Masson will also talk about the art of singing Handel's music in a captivating presentation on "Tu del ciel ministro eletto" from *Il trionfo del tempo e del disinganno*, George Frederic Handel's first ever oratorio.

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**Monday, February 15, 2021 at 7:00 PM**

**Benedicte Jourdois presents "Romance of the French Voice"**

Paris native **Benedicte Jourdois** will discuss the musical genre of art song, the poetic melding of a single vocalist and single accompaniment, traditionally piano, to emphasize the emotion of the poet's storytelling. She will focus on the work of Franz Liszt that will be performed by Nicole Heaston in concert with the ESO in a broadcast on WFMT on Feb. 25.

Jourdois currently serves on the music staff of the Metropolitan Opera and on faculty at the Juilliard School and Chautauqua Opera Voice Program. She has appeared as a soloist and recitalist on such stages as Carnegie Hall, Alice Tully Hall in New York, and the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. She has also worked with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Pittsburgh Opera, Houston Grand Opera, and the Spoleto Festival USA in Charleston, SC.

**Monday, February 22, 2021 at 7:00 PM**

**Nicole Heaston talks with ESO Executive Director Erik Malmquist: A Life on the Stage**

**Nicole Heaston**, who grew up in Chicago, is one of today's most sought-after sopranos. She has performed starring roles in operatic productions at the Metropolitan Opera, San Francisco Opera, Houston Grand Opera, Royal Danish Opera, Norwegian National Opera, and Boston Lyric Opera, as well as concert appearances with the Baltimore Symphony, National Symphony, Detroit Symphony, Indianapolis Symphony, and Houston Symphony, with whom she appeared as the soprano soloist for their recently released album of Haydn's *Creation*.

In this live-streamed conversation, ESO Executive Director Erik Malmquist will speak with Heaston about her musical journey from her youth in Chicago, to studying music and voice in Ohio, to her long-standing relationship with the Houston Grand Opera, to performing worldwide. They will also talk about Heaston's upcoming ***God & Love*** performance, featuring principal players from the ESO.

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**Wednesday, February 24, 2021 at 7:00 PM**

**Jessie Montgomery: "The Next Generation of Composition"**

Join ESO Executive Director Erik Malmquist as he interviews acclaimed composer, violinist, and educator **Jessie Montgomery**. The recipient of the Leonard Bernstein Award from the ASCAP Foundation, Montgomery's works are performed frequently around the world by leading musicians and ensembles. Her music interweaves classical music with elements of vernacular music, improvisation, language, and social justice, placing her squarely as one of the most relevant interpreters of 21st-century American sound and experience. The Washington Post described her works as "turbulent, wildly colorful and exploding with life."

Accompanied by the ESO, Nicole Heaston's performance of Montgomery's "I Want to Go Home" will be featured on WFMT on February 25, 2021 at 8:00 p.m. CST.

The ESO was founded in 1950 and became a fully professional ensemble in 1985. Over its history, the ESO has featured a roster of legendary soloists including classical music legends Yo Yo Ma, Kathleen Battle, Itzhak Perlman, Pinchas Zucherman, Sir James Galloway and James Ehnes. The ESO has been named Orchestra of the Year four times by the Illinois Council of Orchestras (1988, 1999, 2005 and 2016).

A community organization that draws its creativity and artistry from the Elgin area, the ESO is dedicated to giving back to the areas it serves. Ensemble members regularly perform at local hospitals and hospice centers, offer music education programs within local schools, and provide free experiences through the Listeners Club and open-to-the-public rehearsals.

The ESO is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization. To learn more or to support the ESO, visit [www.elginsymphony.org](http://www.elginsymphony.org).

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