

# ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

## L.A. Jewish Symphony Celebrates 25th Anniversary With *The Music Of Eric Zeisl*

In 1938, at the age of 33, Austrian composer Eric Zeisl and his wife fled the Nazi invasion of his home in Vienna for a new life in the U.S. When he arrived in L.A., Zeisl committed himself to applying his mastery of classical compositional technique to commemorating the destroyed Jewish European heritage.

Now, in celebration of the Los Angeles Jewish Symphony's (LAJS) 25th anniversary, Albany Records has just released *The Music Of Eric Zeisl* with the LAJS, conducted by Dr. Noreen Green.

The new CD was produced and engineered by multi-Grammy Award-winning Frederick Vogler and was made possible with the support of Zeisl's grandson, E. Randol Schoenberg, and Pamela Schoenberg.

"This recording is truly a passion project for all of us involved with the Los Angeles

Jewish Symphony," said Dr. Noreen Green, LAJS artistic director and conductor of *The Music of Eric Zeisl*. "When we recorded the CD last spring, we knew it was a special moment and I am forever grateful to Randy and Pamela Schoenberg for making this all possible. It's a great honor for us and for his family to now have his grandfather's music available to all."

"I'm a big fan of Noreen and the symphony, which has been a major proponent not only of the works of my grandfather, but also of so many other deserving composers, many of whom would be much better known if not for the fact of their persecution by the Nazis," said Schoenberg. "I knew how much Noreen loved *Jacob and Rachel* from when she performed it a decade ago, and I agreed that this recording would be a terrific way to commemorate the orchestra's 25th anniversary."



Dr. Noreen Green

Born in 1905, Zeisl fled Austria in 1938, arriving first in Paris and then to New York City before emigrating to Los Angeles in the early 1940's. He worked in the film industry and then in academia, where he met Benjamin Zemach at the then-new Brandeis-Bardin Institute where Zemach headed the dance and theatre department.

The two men set out to create two biblical ballets, one of which, *Jacob and Rachel*, is performed on the recording. The second work on *The Music of Eric Zeisl*, *Variations on a Slovakian Folk Song*, derives its theme from a book of folk songs called *Slowakisch*.

The recording took place at UCLA's Herb Alpert School of Music's recording studio, last April.

The CD is \$16.99 and available online at <https://www.albanyrecords.com> and on Amazon.

Under Green's direction, the LAJS has performed at Walt Disney Concert Hall, the Ford Theatres, UCLA's Royce Hall, American Jewish University's Gindi Auditorium, The Soraya at CSUN, Northridge and numerous other venues.

Special guests who have performed with LAJS include Dave Koz, Tovah Feldshuh, Randy Newman, Theodore Bikel, Marvin Hamlisch and Hershey Felder.

On April 7, the symphony's 25th anniversary gala and concert will honor the organization's founders—Dr. Richard Merkin, founder; Dr. Ian Drew, founding president; Mark Kashper, founding concertmaster and Dr. Noreen Green, founding artistic director and conductor. Broadway star Tovah Feldshuh will headline the concert. For more information, visit <https://www.lajewishsymphony.com/>.

### SCHOOL BOARD

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in the loop, specifically asked Azevedo for the names of the members in this new committee. In response, Azevedo shared a hard copy of that list with the board, but refrained from sharing the list with the half-century-old community newspaper which might transgressively share the information with residents.

"We're moving from a system of schools to a school system," Azevedo explained, noting that BHUSD currently has six different "brands" which need to be combined into one.

Board members were mixed when it came to immediately embracing a name change for Beverly Vista, with Walker-Shuman observing how much history there was in the name.

"I think if we're going to rebrand, it has to be for the entire school district," she said.

Board member Rachelle Marcus, a BHUSD teacher for more than 50 years, said she was open to a name change.

"I personally feel that changing the name of the school and the brand is going to do a lot to bring the community together," she said, noting that she would ultimately go along with the committee's recommendation. "This is a new transformational project."

The brief discussion on rebranding followed an hour-long presentation by Leadership Advisory Group

(LAG) consultant Martin Lowery.

Lowery, who was in attendance for BHUSD attorney Jabari Willis' lengthy presentation to the board on the nuances of the Brown Act before he addressed the board, did not remain to hear Azevedo speak to the board on ideas related to the district's evolving brand. Following Azevedo's informative, Board President Noah Margo said that her talk was part of the agendized LAG update.

LAG, which presumably has just over a month left on its \$250,000 contract, has been working to help manage the change related to reconfiguring the school district from a high school and four K-8 schools into a high school, two elementary schools and one middle school.

"This has been a fascinating journey," Lowery told the board at the outset of his presentation on what he deemed the "strategic architecture" of the reconfiguration process. "Right now we're working on change management. How do we move the heads and hearts of the different stakeholders?"

At the top of LAG's strategic architecture for BHUSD rests the district's vision, followed by its mission.

As a result of several change-management endeavors, Lowery shared with the board LAG's recommendation on changing both its mission and vision statements.

LAG proposed changing

BHUSD's current vision, "Through a safe and supportive environment, every student will engage in a rigorous and enriching quality education, and will be prepared to thrive in a complex, changing world," to become, "Every student will be prepared to thrive in a complex changing world."

LAG further proposed changing the district's current mission, "To inspire and enable each student to achieve academic excellence and meet the goals of college and career readiness," to become, "All students will be inspired and enabled to achieve their potential and become college and career ready."

LAG's attempt to do a bit of wordsmithing to make the district's vision "more short and memorable," as Lowery characterized it, was not met with overwhelming favor on the part of the board.

"What we're doing now is something so monumental...that I would like to see more in the mission and vision," Walker-Shuman said. "I think we owe [the community] more than that. ... I don't think this is reflective of who we are and where we want to be."

Margo, who said he wasn't a fan of the district's current mission or vision, advised that the board and LAG move on from creating anything that improves upon the current phrases now residing at the pinnacle of LAG's strategic architecture and to instead

regard them as "placeholders."

"They don't spark joy in me," he said, referencing the now famous phrase penned by best selling author Marie Kondo, who advises people to discard anything that doesn't spark joy.

While Margo stopped short of wanting to toss out the district's current vision and mission, he did say that it wasn't the time to work on either of them.

"To teach. To grow. To learn," Margo said of the elements that should rest at the heart of BHUSD's mission.

"I don't think it's this board's job to write a mission and vision statement," he added.

In addition to focusing on evolving the district's mission and vision, Lowery shared multiple endeavors that LAG has undertaken in concert with the reconfiguration. Such endeavors included facilitating two steering committee project management sessions, providing recommendations on key messages, conducting interviews with teachers, staff, students, board and parents to understand needs and concerns of each stakeholder group, and providing project support, coaching and communication strategy guidance.

"How we curate our culture is critical," Lowery told the board. "It's important that we look at reconfiguration as a means to an end, as opposed to an end in itself."

## Grammy Award Presenters Announced

The Recording Academy announced Thursday that presenters for Sunday's 61st annual Grammy Awards include current nominees Kelsea Ballerini, Leon Bridges, Luke Combs and Charlie Wilson, along with past winners Alessia Cara, Eve, John Mayer, Bob Newhart, Smokey Robinson, Swizz Beatz and Meghan Trainor.

Also lined up to present are recording artist Kane Brown, South Korean pop sensation BTS, past Grammy nominee Cedric The Entertainer, Super Bowl MVP Julian Edelman and actors Nina Dobrev, Anna Kendrick, Jada Pinket Smith and Wilmer Valderrama.

Scheduled performers include Yolanda Adams, J Balvin, Camila Cabello, Cardi B, Brandi Carlile, Chloe X Halle, Miley Cyrus, Andra Day, Dan + Shay, H.E.R., Fantasia, Lady Gaga, Dua Lipa, Little Big Town, Post Malone, Ricky Martin, Maren Morris, Shawn Mendes, Janelle Monae, Kacey Musgraves, Dolly Parton, Katy Perry, the Red Hot Chili Peppers, Mark Ronson, Diana Ross, Arturo Sandoval, Travis Scott, St. Vincent, and Young Thug.

The Grammys will be hosted by Alicia Keys and broadcast live from Staples Center on CBS at 5 p.m.

— City News Service