

CenterTix



Anchorage Symphony's "Steppin' Out"

Randail Craig Fleischer, Conductor

Step Afrika!, Dance Troupe
Anchorage Symphony Orchestra
Atwood Concert Hall - ACPA

Sunday, November 13, 2011 4:00 PM

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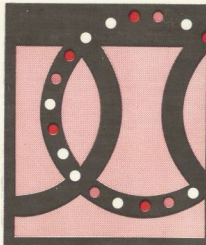
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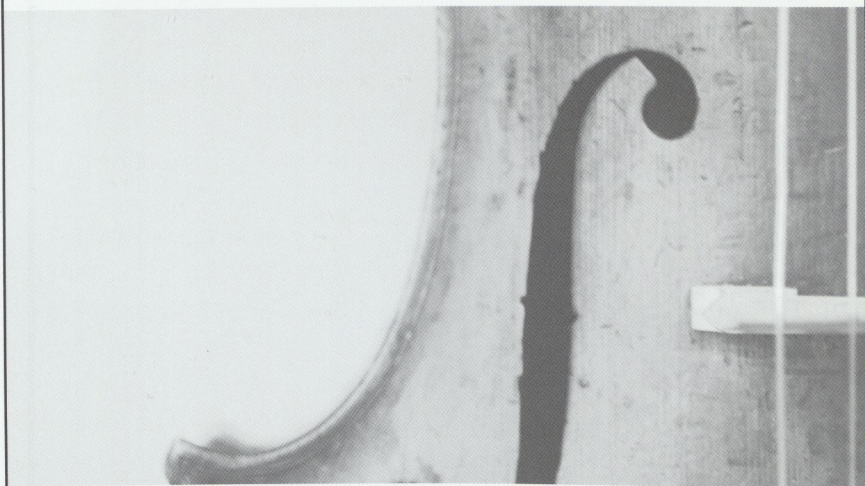


be transported...

2011 | 2012

Randall Craig Fleischer, Music Director | *Season*

On a good note



A standing ovation to all of those who bring the joy of music into our lives. Play on.



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Message from the Maestro



Dance, dance and more dance! Music and dance have been linked for, well – since the beginning of time! Every culture and every tribe links music and dance to their celebrations, their religious rites, social gatherings, etc. Tonight we're taking a bold step in combining the unique African American dance tradition of step dancing with a symphony. This has never been done before and I'm so proud of the entire ASO organization for, once again, having the courage to try something completely new.

But why Bach *Orchestral Suite* and Tchaikovsky *Sleeping Beauty*? Well? Dance! Courante is a dance. Gavotte is a dance. Forlane is an Italian folk dance, bouree is a spunky folk dance with origins in France and Spain, passepied – dance! It's all dance! These were not only the “high” dances of elite society. They were “pop” dances. This was the rock n' roll of its day! So by programming Bach's *Orchestral Suite*, I'm reaching back to the very beginnings of symphonic music tradition to reconnect with the important practice of including current dances in a classical piece.

This “pop” dance connection isn't the only thing which binds symphonic music to dance. There is also, (obviously) ballet. So many works which we now consider to be standard symphonic pieces were written as ballets. (Copland's *Appalachian Spring*, Prokofiev's *Alexander Nevsky*, Stravinsky's *Firebird*)

So tonight, the ASO merges its talents with those of a fabulous dance company – Step Afrika!. Their skill will dazzle you, their passion amaze you. In crafting this collaboration, we give a contemporary voice to an important old symphonic tradition – dance + music. Tonight, we introduce you to a wonderful dance form, building a bridge to a new genre and (maybe!) writing an exciting new chapter.

Randy

Randall Craig Fleischer CONTINUED

fervent advocate of new music, Mr. Fleischer has commissioned and conducted many world premieres.

Mr. Fleischer studied with Leonard Bernstein as a conducting fellow at Tanglewood in 1989. He served as the Assistant Conductor of the American Symphony Orchestra from 1986 to 1989. While working toward his Masters of Music degree at the Indiana University School of Music, he served as chorus master of the I.U. Opera Theater program from 1983-1985. Fleischer received his Bachelor of Music Education from the Oberlin Conservatory of Music and has studied conducting privately with Otto Werner Mueller and in Master class with Seiji Ozawa, Ricardo Muti, Gustav Meier and others.

Mr. Fleischer lives in Los Angeles with his wife Heidi and daughter Michaela.

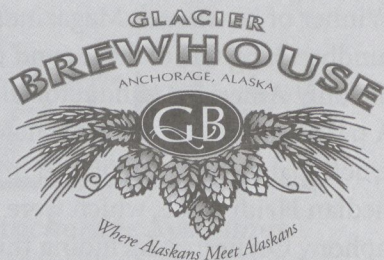


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Step Afrika!

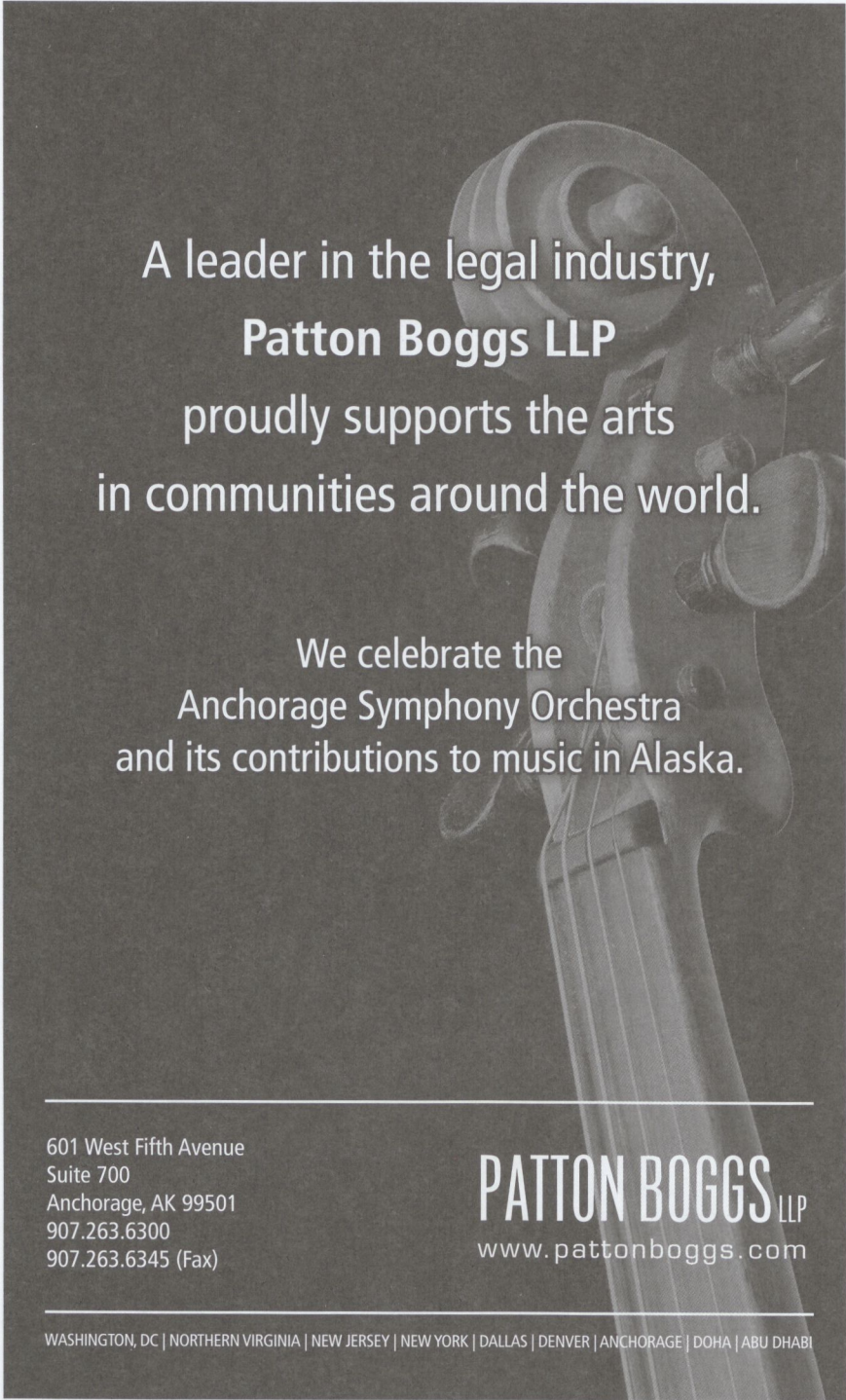
Step Afrika! is the first professional company in the world dedicated to the tradition of stepping. Founded in December 1994, the company is critically-acclaimed for its efforts to promote an understanding of and appreciation for stepping and the dance tradition's use as an educational tool for young people worldwide. Step Afrika! reaches tens of thousands of Americans each year and has performed on many stages in North and South America, Europe, Africa, Asia and the Caribbean. Based in



Washington, DC, Step Afrika! serves as a cultural ambassador for the United States, representing the nation at events and festivals around the world. The company also completes an annual 50-city tour of American colleges and universities from Maine to Mississippi and is a model for

the use of stepping in educational settings, espousing themes such as teamwork, academic achievement and cross-cultural understanding. To learn more, visit www.stepafrika.org.

FOUNDER – C. Brian Williams (Founder and Executive Director) is a native of Houston, Texas. Brian first learned to step as a member of, Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. – Beta Chapter, in 1989. While living in Africa, he began to research stepping, exploring the many sides of this exciting, yet under-recognized, American art form and founded Step Afrika! in 1994. Brian has performed, lectured and taught in Europe, South America, Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and throughout the United States. He is co-founder of the Step Afrika! International Cultural Festival in Johannesburg, South Africa. Brian has been cited as a “Civic/Community Visionary” by NV Magazine and “Nation Builder” by the National Black Caucus of State Legislators. He is the recipient of an Artist Fellowship, numerous awards from the DC Commission on Arts & Humanities and is featured in *Soulstepping*, the first book to document the history of stepping. The *Washingtonian Magazine* cited Brian as one of “40 Washingtonians under 40” to watch in the years to come. He also received the 2008 Mayor’s Art Award for Innovation in the Arts and led the company to three Metro DC Dance Awards for “Outstanding New Work,” “Excellence in Stage Design/Multimedia” and “Outstanding Group Performance.”



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ANCHORAGE SYMPHONY

Randall Craig Fleischer, Music Director and Conductor
Linn Weeda, Assistant Conductor

STEPPIN' OUT

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 2011 - 8PM

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 13, 2011 - 4PM

Randall Craig Fleischer, Conductor
Step Afrika!, C. Brian Williams, Founder & Executive Director
Jakari Sherman, Artistic Director

This concert is generously sponsored by
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J.S. Bach | Orchestral Suite No. 1 in C Major, B.W.V. 1066
Overture
Courante
Gavotte 1 & 2
Forlane
Menuet 1 & 2
Bouree 1 & 2
Passepied 1 & 2

P. Tchaikovsky | Suite from *The Sleeping Beauty*, Op. 66a
Introduction
Adagio
Pas de caractere
Panorama
Waltz

INTERMISSION

**Randall
Craig
Fleischer** | *Symphony in Step*
World Premiere
Dance No.1: Ke Nako
Dance No.2: Zulu
Dance No.3: Deacon's Dance/Wade
(Gospel Piano Consultant, G. LeRon Rainey)
Dance No.4: Nxt/Step: Jazz/Symphonic
(Based on material by Jonathon Matis)

featuring **Step Afrika!**

Gospel Chorus, Ali de Guzman & Stephen Blanchett, soloists
Dawn Lindsay, solo violin
Lauren MacKenzie Miller, Lighting Design

Step Afrikal appears by arrangement with MCM Arts and Entertainment.

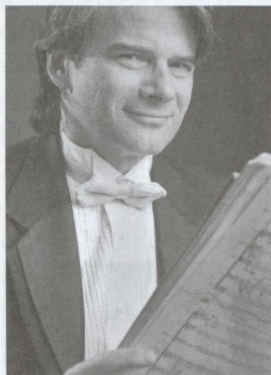
Maestro Fleischer's

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Program Notes CONTINUED

quite differently from almost any other passages in Tschaikovsky's music."

Tschaikovsky discussed the possibility of creating an orchestral suite several years after the ballet was finished. After his death, a suite appeared in 1899 and has especially enchanted concert audiences after the pivotal 1921 London production of the full ballet, which finally achieved international acclaim for the now beloved *Sleeping Beauty*. The five selections comprising the suite include *Introduction* which features music from the *Prologue* – the evil Carrabosse's theme and the entrance of the gentle, beautiful Lilac Fairy; *Adagio* from Act I; *Pas de caractere* from Act III – the dance of Puss in Boots with the White Cat; *Panorama* from Act II; and the memorable *Waltz* from Act I's birthday party sequence.



Randall Craig Fleischer

Symphony in Step World Premiere

Anchorage Symphony Orchestra Maestro and composer/arranger Randy Fleischer provided the following details about the evolution of the unique and remarkable *Symphony in Step*: I was picking up Michaela (my daughter) at her dance class in Pasadena and happened to notice "Dance Magazine" on the table in the lobby. So I picked

it up and started to turn the pages, stopping on an article about a dance company out of DC by the name of "Step Afrika!" The pictures were fabulous and the article was glowing, so when I got home that evening, I went online to search for more details. Finding their website, I saw their demo plus plenty of other footage of the company

AT THE SAME TIME...

The first published record of Stepping was in 1925, the same year:

- Dogsleds reached Nome with emergency diphtheria serum after a 1,000km trip
- Dr. Carter G. Woodson proposed Negro History Week (which later became Black History Month)
- Richard Drew of 3M invented Scotch Tape
- Malcom X, Medgar Evers, Margaret Thatcher and Robert Kennedy were born
- John T. Scopes was fined \$100 for teaching Darwin's theory of evolution in a Dayton, TN high school.

Program Notes CONTINUED

and decided at that moment that I would try to contact them and see if they wanted to do a project. So I sent an email to their founder, C. Brian Williams, who started the company over 17 years ago and has literally helped carry this unique American dance form of stepping to millions worldwide.

You never know with emails, but, in this case, I heard back from Brian. After sending him a video of *Echoes* and other materials, we decided to do a project together. Originally I was thinking that this new collaborative work would premiere in the ASO's 2012-13 season, but as Sherri Reddick and I were crafting the 2011-12 season, it seemed like a good fit. So, last spring – the gig was on!

Now, having decided to do “a project” with Step Afrika! (SA) was all well and good, but next came the hard part – exactly WHAT project? How is this going to work? Stepping, a dance form first developed by members of African American fraternities and sororities, is a magnificent combination of dance and body percussion with intricate, highly complex yet deliciously jazzy rhythms as its base. It is a musical/dance language where the dance itself is the music! It requires no accompaniment whatsoever! So – what’s a composer to do??? To increase this dilemma, Brian felt strongly that SA wouldn’t have sufficient time to create new choreography for this project based on the company’s hectic tour schedule. So, I had to write music to fit choreographic works that already existed. Hmmm. Isn’t the music usually written first?

So, I asked Brian to send me as many videos of SA dances as possible. We had a series of conversations (as late as mid-August!!) about exactly which SA pieces I would set to music and which versions of those pieces! Watching SA perform, you would think that the rhythmic content of their dancing is jazzy, but fairly straight-forward. They make it look soooooo easy! NOT!!! Sheesh! The rhythmic complexity of it would make Stravinsky’s head spin! *Rite of Spring* is like something out of a hymnal

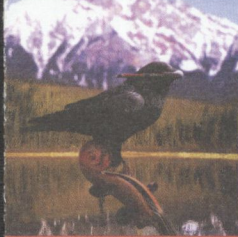
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STEPPIN' OUT

Saturday, November 12, 2011 – 8pm

Sunday, November 13, 2011 – 4pm

Atwood Concert Hall, ACPA

What started with a glance at a magazine cover has resulted in a new symphonic work and a concert inspired by dance. While dropping his daughter off at dance class, ASO Music Director Randall Craig Fleischer glanced down and noticed the cover of *Dance Magazine*. Featured on the cover was a group named Step Afrika!, and the corresponding article inside the magazine compelled him to learn more about the troupe. Upon further research Fleischer grew increasingly intrigued by Step Afrika!, and after several emails and phone conversations that followed, he was commissioned by the Washington, D.C. based group to write a new symphony.



Wanting to premiere the work with the ASO, Fleischer began working to create a thematic program that would include his new piece, *Symphony in Step*. The ASO's November concert, *Steppin' Out*, then evolved as a program inspired by dance. The evening spans four centuries and takes the audience around the world from Europe to Russia and from Africa to the US. Step Afrika! joins the ASO for *Steppin' Out* performances Saturday, November 12, (8pm) and Sunday, November 13, (4pm) in the Atwood Concert Hall.

Step Afrika! is the first professional

dance company to specialize in the art of Stepping. This art form began in African-American fraternities and sororities in the early 1900s. Students combined elements of traditional African dances with jazz and tap to create a unique display of athleticism and artistry. Body percussion, stomping and the spoken word are tightly combined to create Stepping.

ASO Music Director Randall Craig Fleischer has written symphonies incorporating Native American dance and music, yet this new composition

showcasing Stepping proved challenging for him. Fleischer explained, "Watching Step Afrika! perform, you would think that the rhythmic content of their dancing is jazzy, but fairly straight-forward. They make it look soooooo easy. It is not! The rhythmic complexity of it would make Stravinsky's head spin! Those jazzy body rhythms are HIGHLY complex, very detailed and just plain bloody hard to write down! I am not exaggerating at all to tell you that sometimes it would take me three hours or more just to accurately note 90 seconds of body rhythms." After a summer of hard work, Fleischer has completed *Symphony in Step* a work that brilliantly fuses the energy and passion of Stepping with the colors and textures of a symphony.

CONTINUED INSIDE

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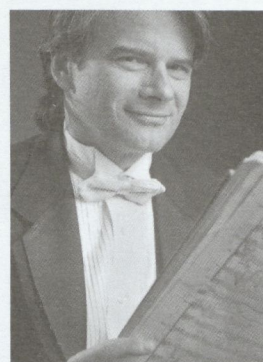
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From the Maestro



Dear Friends,

It's only a short time now before the premiere of *Symphony in Step* featuring the mind-blowing dance group, Step Afrika!, C. Brian Williams, Founder. These are days which, for me, almost seem surreal. For months this project has only been an image in my mind but soon it is going to become a reality.

Wow! I'm flushed with all kinds of conflicting emotions – excitement, fear, joy, fear – more fear! *Symphony in Step* (which my wife Heidi named by the way! Clever, huh?) is really the biggest risk I've taken as a composer/arranger. With my two Native American works, everybody sort of knew what Native American music sounded like; it is drums, chanting, etc. But with Step Afrika!, what exactly is step dancing?

Stepping is an African American dance style which combines body percussion with aspects of jazz, modern and tap dancing to form a rich, highly rhythmic, sensual kind of musical/dance experience. Got it now? More confused? Well, you sort of have to see and hear it to appreciate it. With step dancing, the dance makes a lot of sound! Between the actual stepping and all of the body percussion, it's as though each dancer is also a percussion instrument and a percussionist! It's an incredible experience and I fell in love with it the minute I saw it – and I think you will, too!

Much of the music chosen in collaboration with Step Afrika! and its founder C. Brian Williams, already existed from past collaborations. Further, one of the most dramatic and intense dances in the work is based on several African American spirituals. So, a big part of this project wasn't really composing, it was arranging already existing material and making it sound natural and authentic with a symphony playing it. Brian was a huge help in this process; we've spent a lot of time on the phone this summer and fall! (It might be interesting to note that Brian and I will be meeting face to face for the very first time the week of the premiere!)

Nothing like *Symphony in Step* has ever been written. There are no orchestral works for step dancers and I am thrilled that the ASO will be giving this collaboration its birth. I'm very proud that the ASO, as an organization, has an appetite for adventure. I'm so deeply honored that these distinguished musicians will be playing this piece.

I'm counting the days!

Randall Craig Fleischer

Behind the Music Stand



At each of our Classic Concerts we try to introduce our audience to one of the Anchorage Symphony musicians as he or she gives the curtain speech. There are those who are more comfortable expressing themselves with music than speaking in front of an audience. This feature will let you get to know those musicians.

Today we introduce you to Elise Gelbart, a first violin.

A private violin teacher, Elise has been playing the violin for 28 years. She moved to Alaska in 2004 from Kansas City and began playing with the Anchorage Symphony that same year.

Elise loves performing the Mozart operas, even though she admits the music is very difficult. "Performing it well requires a totally relaxed body and focused brain, but I think it's some of the most exquisite music ever written."

When she isn't teaching or playing her violin she enjoys exploring the outdoors on foot, reading children's books and eating pastries.

Elise's favorite sound or noise is rain drops and she hates the sound of car engines revving.

When asked what's the "coolest" thing people should know about her, she replied "I love to spray paint."

Please give Elise a round of applause.

Champagne Pops

Oh what a night! Thank you to all who helped make Champagne Pops 2011 a success. Those who attended made it a thrilling evening of music, dancing, food, and of course, fundraising. Over \$80,000 was raised to support your Anchorage Symphony Orchestra!

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Steppin' Out

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Stepping is probably not the first dance style that comes to mind when listening to an orchestra. One is more likely to think of something classical such as ballet. With that in mind, Fleischer programmed a suite from one of the most beloved ballets in the repertoire – Tchaikovsky's *Sleeping Beauty*. It is said Tchaikovsky wrote his second ballet in 40 days – a full three-act ballet written in a little over a month! Astonishingly, the result was no fly by night piece; it is a lush, romantic work that reminds us why we fall in love. Walt Disney fell in love with this music and used it as his melody for "Once Upon a Dream" in the 1959 animated Disney film "Sleeping Beauty." Generations of little girls have twirled around their living rooms to this music.

With a world premiere and a suite from one of the most romantic ballets ever written already on the program, the quandary then became how to begin the concert. The solution – you cross a continent and go back a century to open it with Bach's *Orchestral Suite No. 1*. In baroque music, a suite is multiple movements based

on dance forms. In the 1700s, when Bach wrote his suites they were the Top 40 of his day. When a *bouree* began one was hard pressed to find a toe not tapping.

Witness the toe-tapping,

lush romance and pounding energy of *Steppin' Out* Saturday, November 12, (8pm) and Sunday, November 13, (4pm) in the Atwood Concert Hall, Alaska Center for the Performing Arts. *Infrared headphones for the hearing impaired are available concert night from the CenterTix office. Tickets: \$15-\$42/Adult; \$7.50-\$21/Youth and Senior. Military, student and group discounts available. To purchase tickets, visit the CenterTix Box Office at the Alaska Center for the Performing Arts or www.centertix.net or call 263-ARTS (2787), toll free at 1-877-ARTS-TIX.*

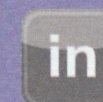
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AT THE SAME TIME...

The first published record of Stepping was in 1925, the same year...

- Dogsleds reached Nome with emergency diphtheria serum after a 1,000km trip
- Dr. Carter G. Woodson proposed Negro History Week (which later became Black History Month)
- Richard Drew of 3M invented Scotch Tape
- John T. Scopes was fined \$100 for teaching Darwin's theory of evolution in a Dayton, TN high school.
- Malcom X, Medgar Evers, Margaret Thatcher and Robert Kennedy were born

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Calendar of Events

November

- 8 Lunch with the Maestro**
The Anchorage Symphony League hosts lunch featuring an informal talk given by Maestro Fleischer. \$16. RSVP with payment to 274-8668 by November 4, 2011.
- 10 Lunch and Learn (Pre-Concert Lecture)**
PLEASE NOTE: This is on Thursday due to Veterans Day
Join Maestro Fleischer for a lively noon-time discussion of the music from *Steppin' Out*. Bring your own lunch.
Noon-1pm, Loussac Library, Public Conference Room.
Co-Sponsored by Anchorage Public Libraries
- 12 Words on Music (Pre-Concert Lecture)**
ASO Education Consultant, Susan Wingrove, gives a pre-concert lecture on the music and personalities of *Steppin' Out*.
7pm, Atwood Concert Hall
- 12 Steppin' Out**
Randy Fleischer fuses cultures and art forms as he combines Step Afrika!, the first professional dance company dedicated to the art of Stepping, with the symphony orchestra. Stepping, a unique dance tradition created by African American college students in the early 1900s, is characterized by a combination of footsteps, claps and spoken word – a dazzling display of athleticism and artistry.
8pm – Atwood Concert Hall
- 13 Words on Music (Pre-Concert Lecture)**
ASO Education Consultant, Susan Wingrove, gives a pre-concert lecture on the music and personalities of *Steppin' Out*.
3pm, Atwood Concert Hall
- 13 Steppin' Out (Encore Performance)**
A program inspired by dance, *Steppin' Out* includes Bach's charming *Orchestral Suite Number One* and music from the beloved classical ballet, Tchaikovsky's *Sleeping Beauty Suite*. With lush and romantic melodies, *Sleeping Beauty* is everything we love about orchestral music! Combining elements from tap, jazz and traditional African dance, Step Afrika!'s highly percussive step dancing will electrify and leave you breathless. Step Afrika! and the ASO team up to premiere *Symphony in Step*, a new work by ASO music director Randall Craig Fleischer.
4pm – Atwood Concert Hall



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CLASSIC CONCERT

STEPPIN' OUT
SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 12 - 8PM
SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 13 - 4PM

JS Bach | Orchestral Suite No. 1
Tchaikovsky | Sleeping Beauty Suite
Randall Craig Fleischer | Symphony in Step

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