

What audiences are saying about NIH Philharmonia...

"My 10-year-old daughter and I came to your last concert in April and she said, 'I want to go again' so we were here today. Again she said, 'I want to go again,' meaning to your October concert. Thank you for inspiring my 10-year-old to be so enthralled with music!" — May 2023

"We thoroughly enjoyed listening to the musicians play all the colors, and your stories brought everything to a higher level!" — May 2023

"What wonderful and ingenious programming!" — May 2023

"I didn't think you could have topped your 'Ode to Joy' concert (2019) but tonight you absolutely did, I mean you really did!!" — April 2023

"Your orchestra plays with such a big heart and loads of passion... we know you inspire them and that's why we don't hear this with other orchestras. Well done!" — April 2023

"No one recites anything let alone Shakespeare at an orchestra concert! Impressive!" — February 2023

"The wall of sound that washed over and through us, I never wanted it to end!" — February 2023

"This was an amazing evening! I'm so glad I came! So much fun to watch. Just what I needed on a Saturday evening." — February 2023

"Haydn is my favorite composer yet I did not know Symphony 47. Now have a new favorite piece by Haydn to add to my list. Congratulations on a fabulous concert!" — December 2022

"We love your introductions, and it's obvious the orchestra loves playing for you." — December 2022

"What an unusual orchestra concert - loved the diversity of the repertoire!" "Your stories make the whole evening even better!" — December 2022

"The only difference between your orchestra and a professional one, is the venue. This is definitely NOT a community orchestra... well done on a demanding program!" — October 2022

"All the music was wonderful yet quite unique! We will be back for more!" — October 2022

"What a marvelous concert! Both pieces were so beautiful. We are so happy to be at your concerts because they are always enlightening. Thank you for all you do!" — May 2022

"Fabulous! We can hardly wait for October to come so we can hear your orchestra again... we are very impressed!" — May 2022

"We were devastated we had to miss the last concert but tonight we made it! Your orchestra is always worth coming to hear!" (from El Paso, Texas) — May 2022

"I go to concerts in Europe all the time and you have something very special, something I haven't seen before. Plus, your orchestra plays with such heart and it shows!" — February 2022

How nice to have young people at both concerts... on Friday night, two 10-year-olds said, "the concert was totally awesome!" On Saturday, a 6 and 8 year old were jumping at the end of the stage, so excited to get my attention. When I finally got to them, the little girl said (while still jumping), "Thank you so much! I loved the music, I really did!" And the boy was equally excited, rocking back and forth, "Yeah, thank you for playing this concert, I had so much fun!" — February 2022

"We wouldn't miss your concerts for anything! Thank you for coming back [from Covid], we just love you and your orchestra!" — February 2022

"I know the Brandenburg Concerti but I had no idea about the story behind the music. Very interesting." — December 2021

"It really is amazing how professional your orchestra sounds. Your concerts are far more entertaining and engaging than Baltimore Symphony. We will be back!" — December 2021

"Your energy is incredible! I don't recall ever seeing a conductor as energetic as you and the orchestra plays with tons of enthusiasm. We've never experienced anything like this before!" — October 2021

"This is our first time to one of your concerts, but it won't be the last... what a fabulous evening!" — October 2021

"Thank you for bringing live music back to us... we only realized how much we've missed it by being here tonight. This was the real shot in the arm we needed!" — October 2021

"This is better than going to the Kennedy Center or Strathmore." — February 2020

"Again, I know, I'm a broken record, but this orchestra has surpassed itself, again! God bless you for everything you are able to do and also so willingly share with all of us." — February 2020

"I didn't know the Rachmaninov, but I loved every note! How is that possible? Mind-blowing!" — February 2020

"You and your orchestra are the best, I mean the absolute best! My favorite was the Tchaikovsky... I wanted to get up and dance!" — December 2019

Two young boys (12-14 years of age) were at the concert, as part of a school project to attend a concert. They both had me sign their programs that were riddled with notes about the evening. The one said Tchaikovsky was his favorite while the other countered with, "No way! Berlioz was the best!" Then the one boy gave me a big hug and whispered in my ear, "Thank you so much." — December 2019

"Every time I come to your concerts, I think 'this is the best yet' and then you play an EVEN BETTER concert, like tonight! You must be higher than high!" — October 2019

"What a glorious night! I'm from NIH and you do us proud!" — October 2019

"What a triumph! I've never heard this live (Beethoven No.9) before and in this setting, WOW!" — April 2019

"Carnegie Hall has got nothing on you!" — April 2019

"You are relentless! I love it! You have so much energy and you keep giving and giving and giving! Where does it come from?!" — April 2019

"It was my first time tonight and I am beyond impressed! I cannot wait to return and bring friends. Thank you for a great evening!" — March 2019

"There is something that sets your orchestra apart from all the rest - it has a soul. Your musicians play with more heart and passion than any orchestra in the area." — March 2019

"A real triumph, what an evening! Two works so vastly different yet they complimented each other quite well." — December 2018

A woman from Manhattan, NY came to the concert, after hearing so much about NIHP from friends... "I am beyond impressed! What an orchestra and what a tremendous evening! Next time, I will bring a whole group with me." — December 2018

"This was my first time tonight to your concert and it will NOT be my last... what a great evening! And I will bring my friends next time!" — October 2018

"We love your concerts! The orchestra plays with more heart and passion than professional orchestras in the area. Congratulations!" — October 2018

"Appalachian Spring is my favorite piece in the whole world and I have heard it over 50 times. But this orchestra played it with more feeling than I have ever heard. I was in tears and I told my husband I can never listen to it again because other performances will pale in comparison." — May 2018

"The orchestra's sound and energy came out and enveloped all of us... we were under your spell." — May 2018

From a 10-year-old, "I liked the concert and I really liked your stories." — March 2018

"To hear this symphony [Mahler Symphony No. 5] in this setting was mind-blowing. I go to the NSO a lot but being in this performance space, up front and personal, was something extraordinary. I heard instrument combinations I never knew before and to feel the orchestra's nuances and energy and command of the music... WOW!" — March 2018

"Your orchestra can play anything and what a fabulous program... it was very clever! Great introductory notes, as always, and the hat and boas were priceless!" — December 2017

"Last night was AWESOME! When I need a shot of energy and enthusiasm, I will listen and watch you on Google!" — December 2017

"I loved this program and I loved your stories, thank you for this concert, I really loved it!" — October 2017

"I can't believe I'm going to say this, again, but it's true... your orchestra has outdone themselves, AGAIN... and I didn't think that was possible. Thank you SO much!" — October 2017

"I don't know how you do it, but your orchestra is always raising the bar and out-doing themselves!" — June 2017

"Mahler 4 is my favorite Mahler symphony and your performance is now my favorite performance." — June 2017

"We can hardly wait until October, we will definitely be back!" — June 2017

"What you get out of your orchestra is nothing short of beauty beyond compare. I was washed with the beautiful waves of the Hovhaness... gave me goosebumps. Then the Holst blew me away!" — April 2017

"I saw more colors tonight in the music you conducted. Your orchestra is simply the best! We go to Strathmore and other concerts but your concerts are BY FAR the best concerts in the area!" — April 2017

"I've seen other conductors but you are the real deal, truly brilliant!" — April 2017

"I gave up my ticket for Hilary Hahn with the NSO to be at this concert, and I'm so glad I did. Thank you for 5 years of extraordinary concerts." — February 2017

"Phenomenal concert, as always, but this concert was something special... I can't put my finger on why it was but I'm awfully glad I did not miss it!" — February 2017

"Thank you for these concerts! You have no idea how much we appreciate hearing your stories and your amazing orchestra. You bring so much joy to our lives in so many ways, thank you, thank you, thank you!!" — February 2017

"Very clever programming... and we **were** expecting some Christmas encore but with the magnitude of the evening, it would have spoiled it. Thank you for not playing anything else. We look forward to February!" — December 2016

"Thank you for your introductions. In the Debussy, I could see the cathedral rising out of the water, it was awesome!" — December 2016

"Your orchestra is getting so big! And I don't mean big as in size. I mean big as in sophisticated. I go to hear many orchestras play, and I never hear concerts like yours. And each year it gets better!" — October 2016

"This is better than going to the Kennedy Center or Strathmore. Your orchestra plays with more heart and passion than those other orchestras... and your stories bring the music off the page." — October 2016

"We don't get the same feeling after a BSO concert, your concerts are simply the best! We LOVE you and your orchestra! I could hear the horses galloping and see the wagons crossing the plains in the Coolidge... what an interesting piece!" — June 2016

"We just made it... drove in from El Paso and got to DC last night... didn't want to miss your concert... it was incredible!" "Your stories are very interesting and add so much to the performance, making this orchestra even more special than it already is." — June 2016

This was from an elderly woman who used to live in Boston and go to the Boston Pops concerts (for 6 years), and said, "your concert tonight was better than ANY concert I ever attended with the Pops, EVER! Brava!" — April 2016

A Mother and her daughter said this was their second NIH Philharmonia concert and, "In two concerts you have managed to outdo the National Symphony which we have been going to see for years." — April 2016

"What a production, what glorious music, what command you have over all those people! I'm going to hear the Requiem next week with BSO but I already know it won't be nearly as good as this performance. Thank you for your gifts." — February 2016

"When I used to drive around, I would listen to the radio and play country music or the oldies or jazz. But now when I drive, I listen to classical music and that's because of you! You and your concerts are a gift, thank you." — February 2016

"I don't think Beethoven wrote that... I think it was written by God and he gave it to Beethoven to copy down for all humanity. Thank you for the stunning performance. I am in awe of what music you make." — December 2015

"A truly beautiful concert" and "we love to hear your introductions, they're so interesting and helpful!" — December 2015

"Truly beautiful playing this evening! We also love to hear your introductions because they are so interesting and helpful to the music." — October 2015

"What exquisite sounds from your orchestra!" — October 2015

"This was a concert beyond all others. Your stories are simply the best and the orchestra has gone past what I thought possible, congratulations! Baltimore Symphony and the NSO should learn from you and your orchestra! What a performance!" — June 2015

"I was blown away by the quality of the orchestra... stunning playing and no indication they weren't pro's... and you are clearly a brilliant conductor, with a vivid color and dynamic imagination and beautiful rhythmic precision. Your spoken program notes were delightful! I am so inspired and plan to come to future concerts!" — June 2015

"This is how amazing this (amateur) orchestra sounds like in a concert?! What does that say about a professional orchestra?" — April 2015

At the end of the first tableau in Stravinsky, a man said in complete spontaneity, "WOW!" — April 2015

"This orchestra is more professional sounding than the professional orchestras in and around town! Plus, your introductions are like no other... we loved the stories about Stravinsky's Rite of Spring! Your introductions are as much part of the performance the music itself. Brava!" — April 2015

"What we heard tonight was breathtaking! From the beautiful songs your soloist sang to the haunting Death and Transfiguration, Strauss was a master of depth and feeling... so are you!" — December 2014

"Well, this was simply marvelous but what I don't understand is why you and your orchestra aren't at the Kennedy Center? This was far more engaging than any concert I've ever attended there!" — December 2014

"I have to tell you, I must have 400 CDs of classical music, collected back when I would buy simply because the magazines of the day would list the top hitters coming out, but I didn't know a freaking thing about classical music. I still don't, other than names of composers and pieces, and what I like and don't like. After hearing the Tchaikovsky 4th symphony, I sped back home to see if I had it, and sure enough, I have a 3 CD set of all the Tchaikovsky symphonies... I played it nice and loud, and it was great, but not as great as experiencing the real thing with the NIH PHIL!!!" — October 2014

This was from a Russian man who was astonished by the sound of the folk tune "In the Field Stands a Birch tree" [from Tchaikovsky Symphony No.4]... he didn't know the symphony used this folk song and said, "I was so moved by the incredible sound of the orchestra. I must share with you a recording of the original folk tune... it will surprise you as much as you surprised me with this symphony tonight; thank you for an incredible evening."
— October 2014

"If I had to pay \$150 to hear this concert, it would be worth every penny!" — June 2014

This comment is from a man who had been planning to coming to the June concert for a month but suffered a serious stroke... yet he was miraculously able to make the concert... "What beautiful music you make and I cannot begin to thank you for this concert (tears well up in his eyes)... the sounds, the stories, everything... God bless you and your orchestra." — June 2014

"I think that piece (Mendelssohn Violin Concerto) is the most beautiful piece I've ever heard in my life, I was in tears at the end!" — April 2014

"My mother came from Tampa, Florida, just to hear your orchestra. You really are a gift to so many people, you really are, thank you!" — April 2014

From a nine-year-old, "I really liked the music... and I could SEE the swans flying." (Sibelius Symphony No. 5) — February 2014

"What music your orchestra plays, I won't go anywhere else!" — December 2013

"I started coming to your concerts a couple years ago, I'm Russian, and when you spoke in Russian?! I am so in awe of what you and your orchestra can do. I didn't know about the stories you shared about Tchaikovsky, I learn something every time I come, thank you!" — December 2013

"I'm from NIH and this orchestra makes me proud... what an incredibly talented group. The venue, the music, the following you have, just tremendous!" — October 2013

"I drove an hour to see your orchestra play, and if I had to walk, I would have. I know people here who drove two hours." — June 2013

"Every member of your orchestra should receive a huge bouquet of roses for their playing and the soloists were fantastic! We can't wait until your next concert; too bad it's not until October. Thank you for sharing your gifts with us. All of you are amazing." — June 2013

"I felt like I was back in Carnegie Hall but I like you and your orchestra much better!" — April 2013

"I recently heard Mahler on the radio but this performance tonight made that one sound amateur... completely blew it out of the water!" — April 2013

"I didn't know what was pulling me out of my seat at the end but I jumped to my feet... what a phenomenal performance!" — February 2013

"I recently attended a BSO performance of Pictures (at an Exhibition) and this performance completely blew that one out of the water!" Another nearby audience member chimed in, "I was at that same concert and I completely agree!" — February 2013

"You are such a positive impact... thank you for changing my daughters' lives!" — February 2013

An older man came up to me and spoke in Russian (because I had spoken some of my introduction in Russian). I didn't understand anything he said but from the gleam in his eye and his huge smile, not to mention the flowers he presented me with, I'm confident he was ecstatic. I responded "thank you" in Russian and he gave me a big hug. — December 2012

From a seven-year-old, "This was my first orchestra concert and I really liked it... but I was scared when the loud note was played (Haydn, Surprise Symphony) but I want to come back!" — October 2012

"I thought I was listening to the radio, the orchestra sounds so good!" — October 2012

"The way you tell the story, it's as if you WERE THERE... walking with Beethoven in the woods, being AT that concert in Vienna when the heating system malfunctioned, you HEARD Disney and Stokowski chatting at that restaurant... it was all wonderful!" — June 2012

"Congratulations on another superb concert! Anne and I both thoroughly enjoyed every part of it... the selections, the performance, watching the musicians "close-up," and certainly meeting the music director and conductor. You have two big fans in Fairfax!" — April 2012

Just as extraordinary as the concerts are, there are also some extraordinary people in the audience. This comment is from a man who was the Music Director of the military bands in Moscow, Russia, and he was a pupil of Shostakovich (he is 89 years old). "I've seen many, many conductors in my life and you, you are among the best! Your passion, your conducting, your hands... so musical, so formidable!" — April 2012

"I have season tickets to the NSO but after tonight, I'm going to cancel those tickets and start coming to NIH Phil, this is a great orchestra and great entertainment!" — December 2011

"You do it all! Exquisite conducting, delightful selections w/ background, marketing, fliers, podcasts... and whatever else, naturally. And you do it all with such enormous joy! You're an inspiration for creating a tailor-made world around yourself that encompasses the things you love to do most and a world that at the same time does "good," too (benefits the community at large, helps sick children, and provides an avocation for some very bright folks). What an incredible win-win-win-win. See you in February...of course." — December 2011

"You are not only the best conductor, but have what we call in Spanish "Angel". You connect with the public and make the evening really enjoyable. I can see patients at the Clinical Center or Children's Inn who may not be able to go to the concerts, really benefitting from having access to the beauty (and curative power) of your music year-round." — October 2011

"Thank you, Doctor, your Philharmonia adds greatly to the cultural life of this community, and I look forward to the next concert. Thank you for your efforts." — April 2011

"Lenny Bernstein would have been proud of that Adagio (Barber)... what an incredible job... and the intonation, it was spot on... just terrific!" — December 2010

"I haven't heard the finale of Shostakovich No. 5 like that in years, thank you. You and your orchestra reached a new high tonight, what a performance!" — October 2010

"I've attended the NY Philharmonic for 40 years and in all that time, I never heard or seen such an impressive performance, gosh you're good!" — October 2010

"I used to go to concerts at Carnegie Hall when Toscanini was conducting... and you are the reincarnation of him! Just marvelous music and you are so elegant with your hands. Thank you for a memorable evening." — May 2010

"I am from Turkey and the Turkish sound you achieved in the "Serail" (Mozart) was just marvelous. I was so pleased to hear it as that percussive sound really reminded me of home. Thank you!" — December 2009

"My parents came last night. They live in Rochester and have spent many years going to Eastman events and RPO, and they were very, very impressed, both with the quality of the performance and the repertoire, and they really liked hearing about Prokofiev. My dad wants a copy of the recording so he can take it to RPO and show them what they *should* be playing ;) (they were bored with the repertoire in Rochester this season). So, excellent job to you and thank you for pushing us to our limits and making the group what it is!" — May 2009

"Some of us were trying to figure out what it is you do to get people to play what seems beyond their reach. We are lucky to have you!" — February 2009

"This is my first time coming to your concerts but definitely NOT my last!" — December 2008

"I didn't like Berlioz before tonight but the way you conducted the orchestra through it, you have changed my mind... Bravo!" — May 2007

A letter from an audience member, sent to the guest narrator, Ron David...

"Dear Ron,

This note is to let you know how much my grandchildren and I enjoyed the performance last Saturday night. Your reading was outstanding and obviously enjoyed by the full house. You may not have noticed but the vestibule was filled with standees and many sat in the aisles. I watched faces during the performance and noticed that everyone was enthralled by the music and the recitation. Being able to bring such joy to young and old alike must give you, Dr. D'Alimonte and the members of the Philharmonia a special feeling ... known only to those having great talent.

Of particular pleasure to me was seeing the facial expressions of nearby tots engrossed by every word of your recitation and by every note of Prokofiev's Peter and the Wolf.

This 72-year-old now understands what the teacher in a music appreciation class of long ago was trying to do with her record and Victrola. Prokofiev's piece was our introduction to the world of real music. Please pass along my appreciation and congratulations to Dr. D'Alimonte and her wonderful organization. Besides the magnificent sounds ... it gave me great pleasure to see how much the musicians enjoyed themselves while making us all happy.

If I could describe the looks on certain faces when it was revealed that the duck was merely swallowed and could be heard still alive ... or the looks of emotional ups-and-downs as the recitation and music proceeded through its many moods ... I would. I'll leave this description to the capable imaginations of you, Dr. D'Alimonte and the wonderful musicians.

Please tell Dr. D'Alimonte that I was impressed with her wit, her charm and how she continued my long-ago music appreciation class with her words as well as her performance.

Jessica, Matthew and I now have a very special memory that will now become a part of the Davis family's lore. Again, thank you all so very much." — December 2007