CONCERT CONNECTS VIBRANT VIDEO GAME COMMUNITY
RPO, RIT & The Strong partner for Heroes: A Video Game Symphony
Connection reflects genre’s collaborative nature: technology + art

Rochester, NY – The Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra (RPO) presents its fourth video game Special Concert in as many years on Thursday, October 26 at 8 p.m. in Kodak Hall at Eastman Theatre: Heroes: A Video Game Symphony. From the same creators as last year’s The Legend of Zelda: Symphony of the Goddesses comes this hero’s journey told through the fantastic worlds of some of the most popular video games of all times: The Elder Scrolls, Final Fantasy, BioShock, Portal, and more. Guest conductor Miriam Burns will lead the RPO and Rochester chorus Madrigalia (Cary Ratcliff, director), while stunning visual projections bring the art of video games to dazzling life. Cosplay (costume play) is also encouraged at the performance.

But wait – there’s more. As with Zelda, a panel of experts will discuss gaming with audience members immediately following the concert. Facilitated once again by promotional sponsor The Strong’s International Center for the History of Electronic Games (ICHEG) – along with concert sponsor RIT’s MAGIC Spell Studios, the Center for Leadership & Civic Engagement, and Upstate Region Interactive Technologies Hub – this free discussion is a must-stay for many audience members.

“Rochester happens to be a hot-bed of sorts for video gamers,” says Shannon Symonds, curator from The Strong’s ICHEG, who will once again lead the post-concert panel. “Not only does The Strong house the world’s largest public collection of electronic games and host the World Video Game Hall of Fame – which includes several of the concert’s featured games – but this collaboration between the RPO, RIT, and The Strong focuses attention on the vibrant, growing local gaming industry.”

That industry is further served by RIT being named one of three Digital Gaming Hubs in New York state (along with Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute and New York University) by Empire State Development last year.

“RIT is leading the way in Rochester by fostering innovation and creating collaborative activities like this that encourage students and entrepreneurs to enter the games industry,” explains MAGIC Spell Studio Digital Gaming Hub Coordinator Rob Mostyn, who will be part of the panel as well. “Exciting games and digital media experiences are being created right here in Rochester by students and local studios like Darkwind Media, Workinman, and Second Avenue Learning.”

“What is startling, is the power of this sub-sector of tech,” adds Heidi Zimmer-Meyer, president of Rochester Downtown Development Corporation (RDDC). “Video games are where technology and art really connect. Game developers, software designers, and hardware engineers collide with animators, composers, graphic artists, storywriters, and musicians. They become these huge collaborative experiments that celebrate the creative mind and attract a massive audience. And Rochester has now become a significant growth center for this rapidly advancing global industry.”

Also on the post-concert panel: Heroes’ director/producer and video game designer Ryan Hamlyn, guest conductor Miriam Burns, and six-time Emmy Award-winning composer and conductor Mark Watters, director of the Beal Institute for Film Music and Contemporary Media at the Eastman School of Music.
“Coming together to exchange ideas is exactly what collaborative art forms like this are all about,” says Watters, whose many credits include several video game scores. “I’m looking forward to being a part of this very interesting discussion.”

The Strong’s International Center for the History of Electronic Games (ICHEG) collects, studies, and interprets video games, other electronic games, and related materials and the ways in which electronic games are changing how people play, learn, and connect with each other, including across boundaries of culture and geography. As a result of ICHEG’s efforts, The Strong’s collection of video games, other electronic games, and game-related historical materials is the largest and most comprehensive public assemblage in the United States and one of the largest in the world.

RIT’s MAGIC Center is a university-wide research and development laboratory and a production studio that assists in efforts to bring digital media creations up to marketplace standards and commercialization. Faculty, staff and student researchers, artists and practitioners come together to create, contextualize and apply new knowledge in a multitude of related fields and disciplines as appropriate not only to STEM or the arts and humanities, but their intersection. RIT’s MAGIC Spell Studios, which will open a new building in fall 2018, focuses on nurturing and growing new companies and publishing and distributing their projects. In addition, RIT’s game design and development program was recently ranked second at the undergraduate level and fourth at the graduate level, according to the 2017 rankings from The Princeton Review.

Tickets for the concert start at $24 and are available online at rpo.org, by phone at (585) 454-2100, or in person at the RPO’s new Patron Services Center (108 East Ave., Rochester) and at all Wegmans That’s T.H.E. Ticket! locations.

The Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra (RPO) has been committed to enriching and inspiring our community through the art of music since its founding in 1922. The RPO presents approximately 150 concerts and broadcasts a year, serving up to 170,000 people through ticketed events, education and community engagement activities, and concerts in schools and community centers throughout the region. 12th Music Director Ward Stare joins the ranks of former notable RPO music directors, including Eugene Goossens, José Iturbi, Erich Leinsdorf, David Zinman and Conductor Laureate Christopher Seaman. Principal Pops Conductor Jeff Tyzik has earned a national reputation for excellence in pops programming during his 23-year tenure with the RPO. With Michael Butterman as Principal Conductor for Education and Community Engagement (The Louise and Henry Epstein Family Chair) – the first endowed position of its kind in the country – the RPO reaches more than 16,000 children through its specific programs for school-aged children.

Media please note: High-resolution images of 2017/18 concerts are available at http://ow.ly/m3P3308INu4 and upon request, and interviews and photo/footage opportunities can be arranged.

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