



## Faces behind the Music: Get to know the DSO



*The DeKalb Symphony Orchestra is a 45-year-old institution and one that brings traditional and contemporary symphonic music to local audiences.*



Chester Griffin



Catherine Rogers



Kathy Farmer



Mike Wilson

## DSO

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With **Fyodor Cherniavsky** as music director and conductor and **Richard Rogers** as orchestra manager, the orchestra performs 15 concerts each year, including its popular Annual Children's Concert, which will be held this year at 3 p.m. on Sunday, Jan. 18, at Georgia Perimeter College's Clarkston campus gymnasium. Tickets are \$5 each.

Other performers include dancers from the Decatur School of Ballet, former Ringling Brothers clown **Rob Hadaway** and the Decatur High School Jr. ROTC Color Guard. WSB TV's **Amanda Rosseter** is scheduled to be the narrator.

Cherniavsky said the children's concert, now in its 27th year, is one of his favorites and attracts an audience ranging from 1,000 to 2,000. "This is a wonderful way to introduce children to the instruments and sounds of the orchestra," he said.

The concert will feature **Prokofiev's** *Peter and the Wolf*, **Holst's** *Jupiter* and the *Harry Potter Suite*. Tickets are \$5 each. Call (678) 891-3565 for more information or visit [www.gpc.edu](http://www.gpc.edu).

The full orchestra is made up of 85 members of which 12 receive a small stipend as principal players. An additional 76 musicians volunteer their services and devote some 200 hours a year along with their other colleagues to rehearsals and performances. Among the musicians in DSO are:

**Chester Griffin**, principal bass

**Age:** 62

**Hometown:** Lubbock, Texas

**Currently reside in:** Unincorporated DeKalb County

**How long playing:** more than 40 years

**How long with DSO:** more than 15 years

**How I got started:** I wanted to participate in our sixth grade strings class that was being created for advanced music students because I enjoyed listening to orchestral music and wanted to play one of the instruments.

**Highlight of my career:** Touring the United States with the U.S. Army Field Band and performing with **Steve Wonder**.

**What I do for a living:** Retired instrumental music teacher and church deacon

**Why the DSO and symphonic music is important:** DSO continues to present great orchestral music on a high level that can be enjoyed by any listener of any age. DSO should be a source of pride for everyone in the community because it is one of the oldest community orchestras in the metro area, and it offers a variety of programming for people of all ages, groups and tastes.

**Kathy Farmer**, principal flute

**Age:** 62

**Hometown:** Atlanta. She grew up in Florida and moved back here as a newlywed

**Currently resides in:** Cumming

**How long playing:** 50 years.

**How long in DSO:** 29 years

**How I got started:** I played piano first and really enjoyed it. However, I fell in love with the flute and started in the band at school in the seventh grade. The ability to create a more singing sound and to play many fast notes totally charmed me. Playing in an ensemble gave me a social outlet, since playing piano is a solitary art form until you're old enough to

accompany. I still play piano but only to accompany my flute students.

**Highlight of my musical career:** That's a hard question. There are times when you've played something very simple that you know you've touched someone's heart and those times are special spiritually. Emotionally, probably the highlight was playing *Amazing Grace* as a solo accompaniment to the Dunwoody Methodist Church Choir in St. Peter's in Rome. Musically it was a recital at Spivey Hall when everything just clicked, which is a most joyful feeling. Personally, it was playing a **Mozart** concerto with DSO.

**What I do for a living:** I teach flute and play flute.

**Why the DSO or symphonic music is important:** Symphonic music touches the emotions of the audience members. We are privileged to be able to create an emotional channel to the hearts of our listeners. A friend's mother died last year. She brought her newly widowed father to a DSO concert a month or two after the loss. He cried through most of the concert. Afterward he told her he'd forgotten there was joy and beauty in the world. Hearing our music helped him begin his healing. That is what music can do. That is what we do in DSO. We as individuals bring our love of music, combine it with other musicians' love and then pass it to our audience to give them a gift of emotional release.

**Catherine Rogers**, principal harp

**Hometown:** Griffin (not a native but close enough)

**Currently resides in:** Atlanta

**How long playing:** 35 years

**How long in DSO:** 30 years

**How I got started:** Saw someone playing in a movie, liked the sound and thought it looked like fun. It is fun but, like most worthwhile things, more difficult than it appears.

**Highlight of my musical career:** Playing with many of the world's finest harpists in a tribute concert honoring our teacher, **Alice Chalifoux**.

**What I do for a living:** freelance musician

**Why the DSO or symphonic music is important:** The DSO brings the live, symphonic music experience to people who might not otherwise have that opportunity. It's more than just classical repertoire; it's music of the people from musicals and movies and folk tunes with guest artists from the Atlanta Symphony concertmaster to Banks and Shane. Exposure to this kind of music and the emotions it generates is especially important for children who may never have heard this kind of music at home or school.

**Mike Wilson**, principal trombone

**Age:** 60

**Hometown:** Atlanta

**Currently resides in:** Snellville

**How long playing:** Approximately 48 years

**How long in DSO:** 23 years

**How I got started:** I began playing in an elementary band comprised of students from seven different schools.

**Highlight of my musical career:** Recording with **Robert Shaw** and the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra

**What I do for a living:** Professional musician (teacher and performer)

**Why the DSO or symphonic music is important:** The DeKalb Symphony is the classical music outlet for an audience that is usually not served by the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra. We provide classical music in a much more accessible venue at a more affordable cost. With our "run out concerts," we also serve an audience that in some cases does not have the opportunity to hear a full symphony orchestra.