



PRESS RELEASE

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James M. Johnson named President and CEO of the Omaha Symphony

Omaha, NE – May 4, 2011 – The Omaha Symphony is thrilled to announce that James M. Johnson has accepted the position of president and CEO of the Omaha Symphony. Johnson comes to Nebraska from New York City, where he has served as CEO of The New York Pops for more than 10 years. He will officially start with the organization on June 1, 2011.

“I feel privileged to join this esteemed institution. I cannot imagine a better opportunity,” said Johnson. “The Omaha Symphony is fortunate to have one of the country's great musical leaders in Music Director Thomas Wilkins and a remarkable and creative resident conductor in Ernest Richardson. The incredibly gifted musicians of the orchestra are a great resource for the Omaha community, and I look forward to working with them to find more opportunities to share their gifts.”

Johnson brings more than 25 years of experience in arts management to the Omaha Symphony. In his most recent role with The New York Pops, he managed the artistic, human, and financial resources of the organization, a \$2.5 million, 77-piece professional orchestra performing primarily at Carnegie Hall. He forged significant relationships with major corporate funders, civic and charitable organizations, and leading performing artists. Prior to The New York Pops, Johnson served for nearly seven years as director of operations for the Orchestra of St. Luke's and as general manager of the Martha Graham Dance Company.

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Omaha Symphony names James M. Johnson as new President and CEO

"With his extensive arts experience and leadership successes, we believe James is well-equipped to take the orchestra to even higher levels of artistic excellence and community service," said D. David Slosburg, chairman of the Omaha Symphony Board of Directors. "James has worked with some of the biggest talents in the business and been successful at cultivating relationships with musicians, arts organizations, and corporate sponsors. His relationship-building expertise will benefit our audiences, our musicians, the vibrancy of our organization, and the Omaha community."

Music Director Thomas Wilkins believes the Omaha Symphony's future is bright with Johnson at the helm. "I'm excited about both his energy and his engaging personality—two essential ingredients in leading this organization into the new decade towards its 100th year," Wilkins said.

Bill Ritchie, assistant principal bass and member of the CEO search committee, echoes the maestro's enthusiasm. "I am impressed with his breadth of experience. He brings to the table a large number of contacts in both the classical and pops world, which will be very beneficial to our organization."

Johnson will move to Omaha later this month with his wife and two daughters. "My family and I are eager to move to Omaha. We look forward to joining a community that is so supportive of culture and education—two of the cornerstones of any great city."

ABOUT JAMES M. JOHNSON

James M. Johnson currently serves as chief executive officer of The New York Pops, the largest independent pops orchestra in the United States and the only fully professional symphonic pops orchestra in New York City. He joined the Pops as executive director in December 2000.

At the New York Pops, Johnson led the transition from an organization closely identified with its founder/music director to an institution with a balanced leadership and governance structure, while maintaining its reputation for excellent programming and capacity audiences at Carnegie Hall. He has forged relationships with major corporate funders such as Macy's and the New York Yankees and with organizations such as Ronald McDonald House, Seuss Enterprises, and Mr. Holland's Opus Foundation. Johnson has established long-term artistic collaborations with artists such as Michael Feinstein, Kelli O'Hara, and Larry Gatlin.

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Prior to The New York Pops, Johnson served for nearly seven years as director of operations for the Orchestra of St. Luke's, one of the most active free-lance orchestras in New York City, where he was responsible for producing more than 85 engagements annually, including tours, recordings, festival appearances, and fully staged operas. From 1988 to 1994, he was general manager of the Martha Graham Dance Company. He began his career in Tacoma, Washington, as a publicist and computer systems manager for the Pantages Centre for the Performing Arts.

A native of the Pacific Northwest, Johnson has a Bachelor of Arts degree from Pacific Lutheran University with a major in music (double bass performance) and minors in business administration, computer science, and English. He holds a Master of Business Administration and a Master of Arts in Arts Administration from Southern Methodist University.

James M. Johnson and his wife, Jennifer Katz, live in New York City with their two daughters, Hannah, age 11, and Maya, age 6.

ABOUT THE OMAHA SYMPHONY

The Omaha Symphony, under the leadership of Music Director Thomas Wilkins, presents the finest in classical, popular, family, and holiday concerts at the acoustically superb, architecturally stunning Holland Performing Arts Center. As the largest performing arts organization in Omaha, the orchestra presents more than 200 live orchestral performances from September through June. In addition to MasterWorks, Symphony Pops, Symphony Rocks, Chamber, Sights and Sounds, and Family series concerts, the Omaha Symphony's nationally recognized education programs touch the lives of more than 30,000 schoolchildren each year.

The 2010/11 season marks the organization's 90th anniversary in the Omaha community. For tickets or more information, call 402.342.3560 or visit www.omahasymphony.org.

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