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**Omaha Symphony begins Bernstein centennial celebration with**  
*Appalachian Spring & West Side Story*  
*Program also includes Ellington's Harlem*

OMAHA, Neb., Jan. 17, 2018- Two of America's most lauded composers and their celebrated works take center stage in the kick off to the Omaha Symphony's Leonard Bernstein centennial celebration, *Appalachian Spring & West Side Story*, Friday, January 26 and Saturday, January 27, 7:30 p.m., at the Holland Performing Arts Center.

Conducted by Music Director Thomas Wilkins, the program will feature Aaron Copland's majestic *Appalachian Spring* ballet, with Martha Graham's original choreography performed by Dance Kaleidoscope amid Isamu Noguchi's iconic sets. Bernstein's dazzling score from *West Side Story* will be featured in his Symphonic Dances, while Duke Ellington's jazz opus, *Harlem*, rounds out the concert.

*Appalachian Spring & West Side Story* kicks off the Omaha Symphony's celebration of Bernstein's 100<sup>th</sup> birthday (August 25, 2018) with programming in 2018 that will span two seasons. Special programs commemorating this American composer's centennial include his Symphonic Dances from *West Side Story* on this concert, Bernstein's *Slava!*, Serenade after Plato's "Symposium," and *Chichester Psalms* on the MasterWorks series, a Bernstein-themed Broadway program on the Symphony Pops series, music on the Symphony Joslyn series, and a Family series concert.

Completed in 1944 for a 13-piece ensemble, Copland's *Appalachian Spring* was commissioned for iconic choreographer and dancer Martha Graham, who told the composer she wanted the piece to be a "legend of American living." The title is taken from a poem by Hart Crane, with the ballet telling the story of a pioneer celebration in spring, featuring a bride-to-be and her young farmer-husband's joyful and apprehensive emotions as they settle in to their newly built farmhouse. Copland later rescored the ballet into a suite for full orchestra, winning the Pulitzer Prize for music in 1945.

The Omaha Symphony and Dance Kaleidoscope are among the first to present a score, commissioned by the Aaron Copland Fund for Music, that restores 10 minutes of music Copland cut for his suite. The restored music appears in choreographic order so that this full-orchestra version aligns perfectly with the complete ballet for 13 instruments. This completion also allows the original choreography to be presented with the larger orchestra, and these concerts further feature costumes and sets from the original Graham production.

One of Bernstein's most memorable contributions to music is his brilliant score for the Broadway hit *West Side Story*, later turned into an Academy Award-winning film in 1961. Opening on Broadway in 1957, the musical retelling of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* set amid the tensions of rival gangs in modern New York City ran for 772 performances and introduced the world to iconic songs such as "Tonight," "Somewhere," "Maria," and more. In 1961, shortly before the film version released, Bernstein extracted nine sections of the *West Side Story* score to assemble into his Symphonic Dances.

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Dance Kaleidoscope, Indiana's longest-dancing professional contemporary dance company since 1972, consistently brings the finest quality dance performances to diverse audiences of all ages with a strong emphasis on arts education. The company's professional ensemble consists of 15 gifted, athletic dancers who are trained in the rigorous modern dance technique of Martha Graham as well as classical ballet. Dance Kaleidoscope is under the artistic direction of David Hochoy, formerly a dancer and rehearsal director for the Martha Graham Dance Company.

Tickets to *Appalachian Spring* & *West Side Story* start at \$19. They can be purchased by visiting [www.omahasymphony.org](http://www.omahasymphony.org) or by calling Ticket Omaha at 402.345.0606. Student Rush tickets are available one hour prior to the concert. Any student with a valid student ID may purchase up to two Student Rush tickets for \$10 each.

Prior to each MasterWorks performance, Maestro Ernest Richardson will lead concertgoers in a step-by-step guide through the evening's program. These preconcert preludes begin at 6:45 p.m. in the Orchestra Level Lobby.

The Omaha Symphony MasterWorks series is sponsored by Omaha Steaks.

*The Omaha Symphony is a non-profit organization that presents more than 100 live orchestral performances from September through June. In addition to MasterWorks, Symphony Pops, Symphony Rocks, Movies, Symphony Joslyn, and Family series concerts, the Omaha Symphony's nationally recognized education programs touch the lives of nearly 30,000 schoolchildren each year. For tickets or information regarding the Omaha Symphony, call 402-345-0606 or visit [omahasymphony.org](http://omahasymphony.org).*

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