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## Omaha Symphony closes season with Beethoven's Ninth Symphony

*Program also includes Bernstein's Chichester Psalms*

OMAHA, Neb., May 29, 2018- The Omaha Symphony will close the 2017/2018 season with what many consider to be Beethoven's greatest work, his Ninth Symphony, Friday and Saturday, June 8 & 9, 7:30 p.m., at the Holland Performing Arts Center.

Conducted by Music Director Thomas Wilkins, the program will include Bernstein's *Chichester Psalms*, featuring soloists from the Pacific Boychoir Academy, and Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 in D Minor, with its famous "Ode to Joy" fourth movement. Both pieces will feature the Omaha Symphony Festival Chorus, under the direction of chorus master A. Barron Breland. Beethoven's Ninth will also feature soloists Celena Shafer, soprano; Lindsay Ammann, mezzo-soprano; Anthony Dean Griffey, tenor; and Kevin Deas, bass-baritone.

Written toward the end of his life when the great composer was nearly fully deaf, Beethoven's Ninth Symphony was also his first symphony in more than a decade as he struggled with legal issues and his failed hearing. However, the works of Beethoven's final years are distinct and unlike any he had done before, more intimate and yet grander, with a greater feeling of maturity and a sense of profound spirituality. The triumph of the spirit, the psychological progression from pathos to joy that had been evident in many of his other works found its greatest expression in the Ninth. Beethoven's Ninth Symphony is a work that crowned Beethoven's efforts to articulate in the music the 19<sup>th</sup> century's greatest humanist vision, even while opening new vistas in the field of symphonic composition. A critic at the premiere said Beethoven's "inexhaustible genius revealed a new world to us."

The final movement, the "Ode to Joy," is a celebration of humanity as Beethoven employs the full range of instrumental and vocal resources at his disposal. The familiar theme becomes a soaring anthem for joy, for brotherhood, and for all Beethoven hoped mankind to be. At its premiere, the piece received five ovations, the audience waving their hands and handkerchiefs so the deaf composer could acknowledge how profoundly the music had affected them.

Commissioned by Chichester Cathedral in Sussex, England, Bernstein's *Chichester Psalms* is a setting of Psalm verses in Hebrew. The work shows no trace of the avant-garde experiments Bernstein had recently attempted, although the music uses a musical idiom that might have served for a Broadway show. There is a hint of jazz in the use of asymmetrical and frequently changing meters that mark some of the fast passages. Unusually, the score dispenses with woodwind instruments, relying instead on brass, percussion, harp, and strings.

Tickets to *Beethoven's Ninth* 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, one of the Omaha Symphony conductors will lead concertgoers in a

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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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