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***Mendelssohn's Elijah* to feature 500-voice chorus, professional and local student soloists**

Media is invited to attend Choral Collaborative mass rehearsal Saturday, Nov. 10 at the Holland Center

OMAHA, Neb., October 30, 2018- Mendelssohn's stirring oratorio about the prophet Elijah will be performed by a near 500-voice chorus and professional and local soloists in a grand, once-in-a-decade presentation of *Mendelssohn's Elijah* with the Omaha Symphony, Sunday, November 11, 2 p.m., at the Holland Performing Arts Center.

Led by Principal Pops Conductor Ernest Richardson, *Mendelssohn's Elijah* will feature professional soloists Chelsea Basler, soprano; Shirin Eskandani, mezzo soprano; Michael Kuhn, tenor; and John Robert Green, baritone, as well as nearly 500 singers from Omaha-area high schools as part of the symphony's annual Choral Collaborative program. Two high school students, senior Maddy Nannen from Blair High School, and senior Lilly Weak from Omaha Central High School, will also be featured soloists. Nannen and Weak were selected via audition.

Schools taking part in Choral Collaborative this year include Bellevue West, Blair, Creighton Prep, Fremont, Millard South, Omaha Central, and Omaha South.

Mendelssohn's Elijah is the capstone of the Omaha Symphony's Choral Collaborative, a program that brings high school vocal programs and the Omaha Symphony together in collaboration for a unique concert experience. Choral Collaborative affords students the opportunity to perform world-class repertoire, work with professional soloists, and participate in an intense learning and rehearsal process with the artistic staff of a professional orchestra. The students have been preparing the music with the schools' choral directors, and rehearsing with diction coaches, voice teachers, and Richardson throughout the fall months. Richardson and the soloists will be visiting the schools in the week leading up to the concert for final rehearsals.

The students, soloists, and orchestra will gather for one mass rehearsal on Saturday, Nov. 10, at the Holland Center. Media is invited to attend the rehearsal at 11 a.m.

With breathtaking drama and stunning melody, Mendelssohn's *Elijah* was an immediate sensation when it debuted in 1847. German-born Mendelssohn enjoyed great success in England, and was highly esteemed by Queen Victoria and Prince Albert. He was especially drawn to England's passionate choral tradition, strongly influenced by Handel and his massive *Messiah*.

Mendelssohn's *Elijah* is based on the Old Testament prophet who railed against King Ahab and his infamous wife, Queen Jezebel, who "did evil in the sight of the Lord." Through two parts, the oratorio illuminates key episodes in Elijah's life, including a drought caused by Israel's unfaithfulness in which the prophet demonstrates God's power and grandeur when the land is refreshed with rain, Elijah's time in the wilderness, and his restoration and ascension to heaven in a fiery chariot.

Queen Victoria and Prince Albert attended *Elijah*'s English premiere in August 1847, but by October, Mendelssohn himself was too ill to attend the work's German premiere; he died in November. Aside from Handel's *Messiah*, Mendelssohn's *Elijah* is still the most performed and beloved oratorio in the English-speaking world.

Tickets to *Mendelssohn's Elijah* start at \$19. They can be purchased by visiting 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.

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 and community engagement programs touch the lives of more 40,000 people each year. For tickets or information regarding the Omaha Symphony, call 402-345-0606 or visit omahasymphony.org.

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