

For Immediate Release

Grand Rapids Symphony Performs “Brahms’ German Requiem,” Nov. 20-21

GRAND RAPIDS, MI., November 4, 2015 – A hero, a parent and a kindred spirit inspire the music featured in “Brahms’ German Requiem,” a deeply moving and uplifting concert presented by the Grand Rapids Symphony. Anchoring the program is Johannes Brahms’ most ambitious and thoughtful composition: his German Requiem, written to honor the passing of his mother. The Richard and Helen DeVos Classical Series concert will feature the Grand Rapids Symphony Chorus conducted by Pearl Shangkuan. “Brahms’ German Requiem” will have two performances in DeVos Performance Hall: Friday, November 20 and Saturday, November 21 at 8:00 p.m. Music Director Candidate Rune Bergmann will lead the orchestra.

Norwegian conductor Rune Bergmann is considered to be one of the most talented Scandinavian conductors. He is quickly gaining a reputation as an inspiring and profound musician as well as a dynamic and versatile conductor with an extensive classical, romantic, operatic and contemporary repertoire. Currently, Maestro Bergmann is the Principal Guest Conductor of the Kaunas City Symphony Orchestra and Music Director of the Fjord Cadenza Festival.

The program begins with Sibelius’ “In Memoriam.” Sibelius may or may not have been thinking of a particular person when he wrote the stirring, march-like memorial. It is likely that the piece was inspired by Eugen Schaumann, a Finnish patriot who assassinated a hated Governor-General during Imperial Russia’s rule of Finland. In 1957, the piece was performed at Sibelius’ own funeral.

Next, the Symphony will perform contemporary Estonian composer Arvo Pärt’s most popular work, “Cantus in Memoriam Benjamin Britten.” The work is an early example of Pärt’s *tintinnabuli* style, which he based on his reactions to Gregorian chants. The cantus was composed as an elegy to mourn the 1976 death of the English composer Benjamin Britten. Pärt viewed the Englishman as a kindred spirit and felt that Britten’s music was born from a similar desire as his own.

No one is certain what prompted Brahms to compose his Requiem. It’s likely that it’s intended as a memorial to his great friend and benefactor, Robert Schumann. It’s also possible that it was written to honor the death of his mother in 1865. While not a traditional requiem mass in the liturgical sense, Brahms chose his texts from scripture with great care, making the Requiem essentially personal. Though serious, the music is not somber and leaves the listener with a reassuring tranquility. Jeanine De Bique, soprano, and Norman Garrett, baritone, will be featured during the piece along with the Grand Rapids Symphony Chorus.

Upbeat, a free pre-concert multi-media presentation, will be hosted by Music Director candidate Rune Bergmann and GRS musician Diane McElfish Helle in the Recital Hall before each performance at 7:00 p.m. Upbeat is sponsored by BDO USA.

“Brahms’ German Requiem” will be rebroadcast on Sunday, April 3 at 1:00 p.m. on Blue Lake Public Radio, FM 88.9 or FM 90.3.

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Tickets

Tickets start at \$18 and are available at the Symphony office, weekdays 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., 300 Ottawa NW, Suite 100, (located across from the Calder Plaza), or by calling 616.454.9451 x 4. (Phone orders will be charged a \$2 per ticket service fee, with a \$12 maximum.) Tickets are available at the DeVos Place Box Office, weekdays 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., or on the day of the concert beginning two hours prior to the performance. Tickets may also be purchased through Ticketmaster, 800.982.2787, online at GRSymphony.org or in person at Ticketmaster outlets: select D&W Fresh Markets, Family Fare Stores and Walmart. Tickets purchased at these locations will include a Ticketmaster service fee. Full-time students of any age are able to purchase tickets for only \$5 on the night of the concert by enrolling in the Symphony’s Student Passport program. This is a MySymphony360 eligible concert.

About the Grand Rapids Symphony

The Grand Rapids Symphony was officially organized in 1930 and is nationally recognized for the quality of its concerts and educational programs. Led by Music Advisor Larry Rachleff, Principal Pops Conductor Bob Bernhardt and Associate Conductor John Varineau, nine concert series are presented, featuring a wide range of music and performance styles. More than 400 performances are presented each year, touching the lives of some 200,000. Nearly half of those who benefit are students, senior citizens and people with disabilities reached through extensive education and community service programs. The Symphony’s Affiliated Organizations include the Grand Rapids Bach Festival, Grand Rapids Symphony Chorus, Grand Rapids Youth Symphony and Classical Orchestra, and Grand Rapids Symphony Youth Choruses. The Symphony also provides the orchestra for Opera Grand Rapids and the Grand Rapids Ballet Company. To learn more about the Grand Rapids Symphony please visit GRSymphony.org.

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