

For Immediate Release

**Grand Rapids Symphony 2016-17 season ends with Beethoven's
popular "Eroica" Symphony, May 19-20**

Conductor Larry Rachleff returns with guest soprano Susan Lorette Dunn

GRAND RAPIDS, MI., May 3, 2017 – From "Bonaparte" to "Eroica," Beethoven's Symphony No. 3 faced an identity crisis from the start.

Ludwig van Beethoven intended to nickname his Third Symphony "Bonaparte," for Napoleon Bonaparte, the French general he admired. After Napoleon declared himself Emperor in 1804, Beethoven revoked his dedication and renamed the brilliant piece, "Sinfonia Eroica," to celebrate the memory of a great man."

The solemn, second movement of **Symphony No. 3**, which was premiered in 1805 in Vienna, seems to foreshadow the funeral march of Napoleon, 17 years before his actual death in 1821.

Larry Rachleff will lead the final concerts of the Grand Rapids Symphony's 2016-17 **Richard and Helen DeVos Classical** series at 8 p.m. Friday and Saturday, May 19-20, in DeVos Performance Hall.

Concert sponsor is **Zhang Financial**, and guest artist sponsor is the **Edith I. Blodgett Guest Artist Fund**.

In prelude to the bitter-sweet symphonic work of Beethoven, **Grand Rapids Symphony** will begin the concerts with Claude Debussy's *Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun*. For this French-centered finale, the orchestra welcomes former Music Advisor Larry Rachleff back to Grand Rapids together with his wife, soprano **Susan Lorette Dunn**, to sing selections from Joseph Canteloube's *Chants d'Auvergne*.

"A take-charge maestro who invests everything he conducts with deep musical understanding" (Chicago Tribune), Larry Rachleff is in his 20th season as Music Director of the Rhode Island Philharmonic Orchestra and served as Grand Rapids Symphony's Music Advisor for the 2015-16 season.

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Rachleff is Director of Orchestras and a professor at Rice University's Shepherd School of Music in Houston. Last season, he conducted three of the Grand Rapids Symphony's Classical Series concerts in DeVos Performance Hall.

Australian soprano, Susan Lorette Dunn studied at the Queensland Conservatorium of Music in Brisbane, Queensland. Dunn is a Churchill Fellow and worked with the New York Festival of Song in New York City. She and her husband reside in Houston with their son, Sammy.

Claude Debussy's *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*, based on the poem of the same name by Stéphane Mallarmé, often is compared to the lush and dreamy works of Wagner but in half the time. The work is just nine minutes long.

Debussy himself wrote: "The music of this prelude is a very free illustration of Mallarmé's beautiful poem. By no means does it claim to be a synthesis of it. Rather there is a succession of scenes through which pass the desires and dreams of the faun in the heat of the afternoon. Then, tired of pursuing the timorous flight of nymphs and naiads, he succumbs to intoxicating sleep, in which he can finally realize his dreams of possession in universal Nature."

Joseph Canteloube's *Chants d'Auvergne* includes six of the sweetest French songs and pastorals you may ever hear. Six songs from the collections will be performed.

Malurous qu'o uno fenno is a playful bourée exploring the dilemma whether it is better to be in love or out of love. *Lo fiolaire* is a sensuous tribute to a beautiful girl, spinning at her wheel, with the onomatopoeia of the sound of wheel forming a lilting refrain.

Closing the set and the first half is *Lou coucut*, one of the many bird songs in the Auvergne collections, this one is about a noisy cuckoo.

- **Upbeat**, a free, pre-concert, multi-media presentation will be held before each performance at 7 p.m. in the DeVos Place Recital Hall. Upbeat is sponsored by **BDO USA**.
- The Grand Rapids Symphony this season has introduced a special cocktail for its audiences in DeVos Performance Hall. At every concert in the 2016-17 Richard and Helen DeVos Classical series, try a "**Spirit of the Symphony**," also called a French 75.
- The complete ***Beethoven's Eroica*** program will be rebroadcast on June 4, 2017, at 1 p.m. on [Blue Lake Public Radio](#) 88.9 FM or 90.3 FM.

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Tickets

Tickets start at **\$18** and are available at the **GRS ticket office**, weekdays 9 am-5 pm, at 300 Ottawa Ave. 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. - 6 p.m. or on the day of the concert beginning two hours prior to the performance. Tickets also may be purchased online at

GRSymphony.org.

Full-time students of any age are able to purchase tickets for only **\$5** on the night of the concert by enrolling in the [GRS Student Passport](#) program. This is a [MySymphony360](#) eligible concert.

About the Grand Rapids Symphony

Organized in 1930, the [Grand Rapids Symphony](#) is nationally recognized for the quality of its concerts and educational programs. Led by Music Director Marcelo Lehninger, 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 given each year, touching the lives of some 200,000, nearly half of whom are students, senior citizens and people with disabilities all reached through extensive education and community service programs. Affiliated organizations include the Grand Rapids Symphony Chorus; Grand Rapids Youth Symphony and Classical Orchestra; and Grand Rapids Symphony Youth Choruses. GRS provides the orchestra for performances by [Opera Grand Rapids](#) and the [Grand Rapids Ballet](#) and sponsors the biennial [Grand Rapids Bach Festival](#), which returns in March 2019.

To learn more about the [Grand Rapids Symphony](#), please visit the website or
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