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LINCOLN'S SYMPHONY  
ORCHESTRA

EDWARD POLOCHICK, MUSIC DIRECTOR

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: (LINCOLN, Neb. – April 6, 2022)** Lincoln's Symphony Orchestra is thrilled to present their Classical concert, **Beethoven's Ninth**, on **Friday, April 22 at 7:30 p.m.**

Led by **Music Director Edward Polochick**, LSO is joined by **Icy Simpson-Monroe, Rebecca Shane, Ariel Merivil**, and **Jeff Keele** as well as the **Abendmusik Chorus, Doane University Choir, Doane Collegiate Chorale**, and **Nebraska Wesleyan University Choir** to perform Beethoven's *Symphony No. 9* and the orchestral premiere of **Jake Runestad's** choral work, *A Silence Haunts Me*, with poignant text based on Beethoven's "Heiligenstadt Testament." Of the Beethoven *Symphony No. 9* Polochick says, "This piece is one of the greatest artistic contributions to Western civilization, with genius, lyricism, drama, human emotion, and a universal message that's appropriate for our current times. Long live Beethoven!"

**The Abendmusik Chorus** is celebrating its 50th anniversary this season. In its rich history, the ensemble has sung with such luminaries as Aaron Copland, Randall Thompson, Sir John Rutter, Alice Parker, Sir David Willcocks, Anton Armstrong, and Robert Shaw. In 1994, the Abendmusik Chorus made its international debut with a solo performance at Coventry Cathedral in England. Next season, the choir will take the stage at Carnegie Hall for the first time. The Abendmusik Chorus sings frequently in choral/orchestral performances with Nebraska's collegiate choirs, often at Lincoln's First-Plymouth Church or the Lied Center for Performing Arts. On May 29, the choir's founder Jack Levick will join current director **Tom Trenney** in leading a gala performance in culmination of a 50th Anniversary Choir Reunion celebration. For more information, please visit [www.abendmusik.org](http://www.abendmusik.org)

**The Nebraska Wesleyan University Choir** is one of seven music ensembles at NWU. In 2020, the choir was featured at the National Festival of Sacred Music in Charleston, SC, and in 2021, the ensemble was named a collegiate finalist in the American Prize for their performance of Jake Runestad's *A Silence Haunts Me*. This fall, the choir was invited to sing for the Nebraska Music Education Association conference, and in May, the students will sing seven performances in six states in seven days on their Midwestern tour, including a concert at Chicago's Fourth Presbyterian Church. The students who make up the University Choir come from many majors across campus, and all incoming students have the opportunity to earn a scholarship for their participation in a music ensemble at NWU. For more information on music at Nebraska Wesleyan, please visit [music.nebrwesleyan.edu](http://music.nebrwesleyan.edu)

Under the Direction of **Kurt Runestad**, the **Doane University Choir** is Doane University's premier choral ensemble. During annual national tours, the choir has presented concerts in Albuquerque, Boston, Chicago, Dallas, Denver, Kansas City, Los Angeles, Minneapolis, New York City, San Antonio, Phoenix, Pasadena, San Diego, and at the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C. The choir also tours internationally, and has sung in Austria, Brazil, Estonia, Germany, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Lichtenstein, Poland, Sweden, and Switzerland. In the past decade, the Doane Choir has performed a number of choral-orchestral works with area orchestras, including the Omaha Symphony and Lincoln's Symphony Orchestra. The Doane Choir sang Carl Orff's *Carmina Burana* with the Omaha Symphony in the fall of 2007, and Benjamin Britten's *War Requiem* in April of 2012 with Lincoln's Symphony Orchestra. In April 2015 Doane's entire choral area performed Beethoven's *Symphony No. 9* with Lincoln's Symphony Orchestra.

The **Doane Collegiate Chorale** is a mixed chorus that performs regularly both on and off of Doane University's campus. The ensemble, also directed by **Kurt Runestad**, tours every spring with the University's Women's Chorale.

**Icy Simpson-Monroe** is a passionate singer who has appeared as Gretel (*Hansel and Gretel*), Despina (*Così fan Tutte*), and Catherine (*A View from the Bridge*). She made her professional solo debut with the Marshall Symphony Orchestra in 2011, and has sung with the South Arkansas Symphony Orchestra, the Shreveport Summer Music Festival, the Colour of Music Festival in South Carolina, and the Alleluia Conference at Baylor University.

Icy has won multiple awards, including the State and Regional National Association of Teachers of Singing Competitions (NATs), District Metropolitan Opera Auditions, and the People's Choice Award in the Dallas Opera Guild Competition. Icy is featured on the Naxos label with her CD, *I, too*, and in the award winning documentary *When I Rise*, the story of Barbara Smith Conrad.

Icy holds a Bachelors in Vocal Performance, a Masters in Opera, and an Artist Diploma from the University of Texas-Austin. She continues to perform extensively, and has expanded her work to include her business, The Voice Clinic, specializing in voice rehabilitation/preventative technique. Her website is [www.thevoiceclinaustin.com](http://www.thevoiceclinaustin.com).

**Rebecca Shane** is an active mezzo-soprano soloist locally and regionally. She is a graduate of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, where she studied with Donna Harler-Smith and performed the roles of La Principessa (*Suor Angelica*), Zita (*Gianni Schicchi*), Florence Pike (*Albert Herring*), Charlotte Bartlett (*A Room With A View*), Madam Flora (*The Medium*), Ma Moss (*The Tender Land*), and the Mother in the Sacred Arts Council's production of *Amahl and the Night Visitors*.

She has performed with the Omaha, Lincoln, and Sioux City Symphony Orchestras, and on the Abendmusik concert series. Rebecca is a member of First-Plymouth Church's many choirs, the Abendmusik Chorus, and Tom Trenney's professional choir, Sounding Light, an ensemble based in both the Detroit area and in Lincoln, which assembles singers from across the nation for choral projects and recordings. She has a passion for teaching young voices and, for the past 25 years, has dedicated much of her time to teaching voice performance and encouraging artistic confidence and healthy expression to hundreds of students.

**Ariel Merivil** has sung as a soloist and choral singer in many settings and ensembles, including Exigence, Sounding Light, Cantorei at First-Plymouth Church, Plymouth Choir, Atlanta Symphony Orchestra Chorus, Atlanta's Chorale—New Creation, and others. He is also a collaborative keyboardist and has worked with the Nebraska Wesleyan University Choirs, University of Nebraska Choirs, Wartburg College, and many other ensembles and vocal and instrumental soloists.

Ariel serves as the Associate Minister of Music to First-Plymouth Church in Lincoln, where he leads in worship as a conductor, organist, pianist, and vocalist. He currently leads the Te Deum, Youth Singers, and Plymouth Ringers choirs in addition to the Youth Orchestra. At First-Plymouth, Ariel has helped to lead and foster diverse styles of music in worship, including the Negro-spiritual, gospel, global, and other contemporary music.

A graduate of the Georgia State University School of Music, Ariel earned a dual-concentration Master of Music degree in choral conducting and organ performance and received the Bachelor of Architecture degree from Southern Polytechnic State University (now Kennesaw State University).

Bass-baritone **Jeff Keele** has most recently performed as Betto (*Gianni Schicchi*) with Opera Southwest, where he has also performed Dr. Grenvil (*La Traviata*), the Sacristan (*Tosca*), and Dr. Bartolo (*Le Nozze Di Figaro*). He made his professional opera debut with Opera Omaha, singing the role of the Jailor in *Tosca*, and has sung with the Southern Illinois and Pine Mountain Music Festivals and the Fargo-Moorhead Opera.

Jeff has performed as soloist with the Lincoln Lutheran Choir, Abendmusik, Sioux City Orchestra, Doane College, Arts for the Soul, Bethany College, Opera Omaha, the National Liszt Society, York College, and Lincoln's Symphony Orchestra.

A native of Lincoln, he earned his Bachelors and Masters degrees from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, where he studied with Donna Harler-Smith and performed in numerous productions with the UNL Opera. He sang leading roles in two world premiere operas: the Bass in Randall Snyder's *The Divine Madness* and Frank in Tyler White's *O Pioneers!* He placed second in the Metropolitan Opera's Upper Midwest regional auditions and was the Nebraska District Metropolitan Auditions winner from 2005-2007.

Jeff has performed in musicals with professional companies and community theaters throughout Nebraska, and has taught voice at Concordia and Doane Universities.

Tickets for the concert are available for purchase online at [www.lincolnsymphony.com](http://www.lincolnsymphony.com), by phone at (402) 476-2211, or by visiting Lincoln's Symphony Orchestra's box office (233 S. 13th St., Ste. 1702).

LSO welcomes audience members to a regular seating configuration, and encourages the wearing of masks.

New this season: LSO will make the Pre-Concert Chat available to view online beginning at 12:00pm on the Thursday prior to the concert. Hosted by Nebraska Public Media's Genevieve Randall, each chat is an in-depth look at the music with Maestro Polochick and special guests. The Pre-Concert Chat will also be screened in the Steinhart Room at 6:45pm prior to the concert.

To stay current with symphony events, follow Lincoln's Symphony Orchestra on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter – and don't forget to use #LSOLove when sharing your symphony experience.

In an effort to make all LSO concerts financially accessible, LSO's tickets are available for only \$15 or \$35 each for adults, inclusive of all ticketing and facility fees. Tickets for youth ages 17 and under are available for \$5 each, made possible by the Lienemann Charitable Foundation.

Lincoln's Symphony Orchestra's 2021-22 season sponsors are Immanuel Communities and Union Bank & Trust. The Nebraska Arts Council and the Nebraska Cultural Endowment also provided generous support toward Lincoln's Symphony Orchestra's 2021-22 season.

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