

PRESS RELEASE

L O S A N G E L E S

MASTER CHORALE

**LOS ANGELES MASTER CHORALE & ARTISTIC DIRECTOR
GRANT GERSHON TO PERFORM BEETHOVEN'S
MISSA SOLEMNIS JANUARY 21 & 22, 2017**

Concerts at Walt Disney Concert Hall

First Master Chorale presented performances of the work in 13 years

**Performed with 115 singers, full orchestra, with soloists Raquel González,
Allyson McHardy, Arnold Livingston Geis, and
Rod Gilfry**



Photo: Marie Noorbergen/Tao Ruspoli

(Los Angeles, CA, November 29, 2016) – The Los Angeles Master Chorale will present its first performances of Beethoven's powerful *Missa solemnis* in 13 years on its own concert



135 NORTH GRAND AVENUE, LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90012-3013
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series on Saturday, January 21 at 2 PM and Sunday, January 22 at 7 PM at Walt Disney Concert Hall. Heralded as a pillar of the choral and orchestral repertoire, the work is considered a specialty of the Master Chorale that last performed the work with Artistic Director Grant Gershon in Disney Hall in 2004.

Although Beethoven is believed to have called *Missa solemnis* (“solemn Mass”) his greatest work, the piece is not frequently performed owing to the large number of resources it requires including a full choir, large orchestra, and four soloists. It is also exceptionally technically challenging.

“The *Missa solemnis* is like an epic journey up the river of Beethoven’s tormented psyche as he struggles to find faith at the end of his life,” says Gershon. “There is no chorus on the planet that sings this transcendently challenging music with more visceral power and breathtaking beauty than the Los Angeles Master Chorale. If you love Beethoven, you cannot miss this!”

Composed between 1819 and 1823, the five-movement *Missa solemnis* was a pivotal work at a time when Beethoven was struggling with writer’s block and deafness, and inspired a prolific flurry of new music – including his 9th Symphony – before he died just a few years later in 1827. *Missa solemnis* in D major, op. 123 and his iconic Symphony No. 9 in D minor were premiered in the same year, 1824. These two works not only created a new musical language but were to arguably set the bar for every major choral and orchestral work to come.

Although taking the liturgical form of a mass, Gershon says one of the most powerful aspects of *Missa solemnis* is its innate humanity: “Beethoven, who had a deep distrust of the church and of authority figures in general, asks us to bypass any intermediaries and to listen to the words and music directly in the deepest emotional and spiritual level.”



Beethoven dedicated the *Missa solemnis* to his close friend and patron, the Archduke Rudolf of Austria. On the title page of the score he wrote: "From the heart; may it return to the heart!"

"Beethoven is putting his trust in the listeners to open their hearts, even to a work of great length and complexity," says Gershon.

One of the most compelling elements of the 80-minute work is the fifth and final movement, *Agnus dei*, a fraught but ultimately unanswered plea for peace suggesting that peace will come from within mankind and through universal brotherhood: "The drums of war that have haunted the *Agnus dei* have retreated into the distance but the final prayer for peace is left unanswered," notes Gershon. "It leaves all of us to search our own hearts, as Beethoven has asked us to, for the answers to the questions posed by the *Missa solemnis*."

Joining Gershon and the 115-member Master Chorale for the January performances will be soloists Raquel González (soprano), Allyson McHardy (mezzo soprano), Arnold Livingston Geis (tenor), and Rod Gilfry (bass).

Although performed infrequently, the Master Chorale's history with *Missa solemnis* is relatively extensive, beginning with its first performance in 1965 under legendary choral conductor, Robert Shaw. Performances with the Master Chorale's founding director, Roger Wagner, followed in 1972 and subsequent performances were presented in 1977 (Alfred Wallenstein), 1986 (Roger Wagner), 1990 (John Currie), and 1997 (Paul Salamunovich.) The 2004 performances with Grant Gershon marked the Los Angeles Master Chorale's first performances of the work in Walt Disney Concert Hall.



Outside of its own concert series presentations, the Master Chorale has performed the work with the Los Angeles Philharmonic several times including, most recently, the world premiere of a new staged and multimedia production with conductor Michael Tilson Thomas in 2015.

CALENDAR EDITORS:

WHAT: Los Angeles Master Chorale and Artistic Director Grant Gershon perform a pillar of the choral repertoire, Beethoven's *Missa solennis*.

115 singers, full orchestra, and five soloists.

WHEN: Saturday, January 21 at 2 PM & Sunday, January 22 at 7 PM.

WHERE: Walt Disney Concert Hall, 111 S. Grand Ave.

TICKETS & BOX OFFICE INFORMATION

Tickets to all concerts are available now, starting from \$29:

Online: lamasterchorale.org

Phone: 213-972-7282

Tickets can be purchased in-person at the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion Box Office Monday – Saturday, 10am – 6 pm.

On concert days, box office staff can be reached at 213-972-7282 beginning at 10 am and the Disney Hall Box Office will be open for will call and sales beginning 2 hours prior to curtain time. Group rates are available. Los Angeles Master Chorale offers \$10 Student Rush Tickets at the box office 2 hours prior to the performance, subject to availability. Student ID required; 1 ticket per ID. Please call for additional details.

Please note: children under the age of six are not admitted to Los Angeles Master Chorale concerts.

ABOUT LOS ANGELES MASTER CHORALE

The Los Angeles Master Chorale is widely recognized as one of the country's leading professional choruses and one of Southern California's most vibrant cultural treasures. Hailed for its powerful performances, technical precision, and artistic daring, the Master Chorale is led by Artistic Director Grant Gershon and President and CEO Jean Davidson. It is a founding resident company of The Music Center and the choir-in-residence at Walt Disney Concert Hall. Chorister positions are highly sought-after and the professional choir is a diverse and vocally dynamic group showcasing the many voices of L.A.



Presenting its own concert series each season, the Master Chorale performs choral music from the earliest writings to contemporary compositions striking a balance between innovation and tradition. It also regularly performs with the Los Angeles Philharmonic at Disney Hall and the Hollywood Bowl. Praised for its definitive performances, the choir is committed to recording the choral repertoire and has also featured with Gershon on the soundtracks of many major motion pictures. It is further heard beyond the concert hall via broadcasts by Southern California's Classical KUSC.

Committed to community engagement and fostering music education in schools, the Los Angeles Master Chorale's education programs include Voices Within that encourages young people to write and perform their own songs, an oratorio project for high school students, and the annual High School Choir Festival, which brings teenagers from around the Southland to perform in Walt Disney Concert Hall.

www.lamasterchorale.org

LOS ANGELES MASTER CHORALE MEDIA CONTACT:

Jennifer Scott, Director of Public Relations

jscott@lamasterchorale.org | 213-972-3142 office; 702-510-4363 cell

Gary W. Murphy, GM/PR, Los Angeles Master Chorale Public Relations Consultant

gmurphypr@gmail.com | 310-914-0178 office; 213-700-9645 cell

High res photos of the Los Angeles Master Chorale and guest artists are available from our online [Media Gallery](#).

