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PIANIST BRIAN GANZ AND MAESTRO PIOTR GAJEWSKI ARE AVAILABLE FOR
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National Philharmonic Season Opening Concerts, Sept 17-18 Works by Beethoven/ Symphony No. 7

Award-Winning Pianist Brian Ganz Plays "The Greatest Piano Concerto Ever Composed" Conducted by Renowned Maestro Piotr Gajewski

Bethesda, MD (July 22, 2016)—The National Philharmonic kicks off its 12th anniversary at The Music Center at Strathmore with renditions of some of Ludwig van Beethoven's most popular works, led by Music Director and Conductor Piotr Gajewski. Performances include the *Coriolan Overture in C Minor*, *Piano Concerto No. 4 in G Major*, and *Symphony No. 7 in A Major*, one of Beethoven's most beloved symphonies. Among the program's highlights will be a performance by award-winning pianist Brian Ganz of the *Piano Concerto No. 4*, which he calls "arguably the greatest piano concerto ever composed." The start of the 2016-2017 season is especially nostalgic for both musicians, as the music comes full circle with some of the pair's most memorable childhood performances. Opening night is Saturday, Sept. 17 at 8 p.m., followed by a performance on Sunday, Sept. 18 at 3 p.m. at Strathmore. Ticket prices start at \$28 and are free for children ages 7-17. Strathmore is located at 5301 Tuckerman Lane, North Bethesda. For more information or to purchase tickets, visit www.nationalphilharmonic.org or call 301.581.5100.

The evening's performance begins with the stormy *Coriolan Overture*, inspired by the five-act tragedy by Heinrich von Collin, about the conflicted Roman patrician Coriolanus and his quest for vengeance against Rome. The composition is followed by the *Piano Concerto No. 4 in G Major*, which marked Beethoven's last public appearance as a concerto soloist—and Ganz's very first performance of a concerto by Beethoven at the age of 16. The work's second movement evokes for some listeners the image of Orpheus taming the Furies of the Underworld with his

music, as he arrives there in search of his beloved Eurydice. The program concludes with the *Symphony No. 7*, a popular work known for its energy and joy. A free educational lecture on the history and nuances of the program will be offered in the Concert Hall by National Philharmonic Associate Conductor Victoria Gau before the performances, at 6:45 p.m. on Saturday and 1:45 p.m. on Sunday. Gau concludes, "A lot of the exuberance of Beethoven's *Symphony No. 7* work lies in its persistent dance rhythms."

One of the leading pianist of his generation, Ganz describes the *Piano Concerto No. 4 in G Major* as "innovative and incredibly beautiful." At age 16, Ganz, studying under renowned pianist Leon Fleisher, performed this concerto with the Baroque Arts Chamber Orchestra in Washington, D.C. "It was the first time I had ever performed a Beethoven concerto," Ganz said, "and it was a deeply affecting experience for me. Beethoven seems to be reaching for a new kind of consciousness in this work, a luminous and transcendent awareness that foreshadows some of his later works. The second movement is particularly beautiful as the piano gradually quiets the angry strings, like a great spiritual teacher. It was perhaps the first time I had a glimpse of music as one voice of the divine. And yet there is every human emotion as well: playfulness, longing, sadness, excitement, and great joy."

For Maestro Gajewski, Beethoven's *Symphony No. 7* marks a unique moment in his earlier years. At age 17, Gajewski participated in the 1976 Eastern Music Festival in Greensboro, North Carolina, a music festival for gifted young musicians, and was selected to conduct that piece. It was the first time he had ever conducted an orchestra. "As I recall, Wynton Marsalis was a member of the orchestra," said Gajewski. Marsalis, a talented trumpeter, would later become famous for his jazz compositions. The second movement of the symphony was so popular it was often played again separately during a performance.

The relationship between Gajewski and Ganz dates back to 1991, when the two performed Mozart's *Concerto in D Minor, K. 466* together at the Duke Ellington School of the Arts. It was the pair's first collaboration. Since that time, Ganz and Gajewski have worked together numerous times. "Piotr and the National Philharmonic are like my musical family," Ganz said. "And what could be more joyful than making music with your family?"

Led by Maestro Gajewski, the National Philharmonic is known for performances that are "powerful," "impeccable," and "thrilling" (*The Washington Post*). In July 2003, the National Chamber Orchestra and Masterworks Chorus merged to create the National Philharmonic, an ensemble with more than 50 years of combined history, bringing high caliber musical performances to the Washington area. The National Philharmonic took up residence at the state-of-the-art Music Center at Strathmore upon its opening in February 2005. Now, more than 250 performances later, and with far-reaching educational programming, the National Philharmonic is the largest and most active professional orchestra based in Montgomery County.

The National Philharmonic boasts a long-standing tradition of reasonably priced tickets and free admission to all young people age 7-17, assuring its place as an accessible and enriching component in Montgomery County and the greater Washington, D.C., area.

As the Music Center at Strathmore's orchestra-in-residence, the National Philharmonic showcases world-renowned guest artists in time-honored symphonic masterpieces conducted by

Maestro Gajewski, with additional conducting by Associate Conductor Victoria Gau, and monumental choral masterworks under National Philharmonic Chorale Artistic Director Stan Engebretson.

To purchase tickets for the performances and for a complete schedule, please visit www.nationalphilharmonic.org or call the Strathmore Ticket Office at 301.581.5100. Tickets are \$28-\$88; young people 7-17 are free through the ALL KIDS, ALL FREE, ALL THE TIME program. ALL KIDS tickets must be purchased in person or by phone. Complimentary parking is available.

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Photo Cut Line: The opening night of the National Philharmonic's 12th anniversary season features works of Beethoven conducted by Piotr Gajewski with pianist Brian Ganz performing *Piano Concerto No. 4 in G Major*, Sept. 17-18 at Strathmore.

Photo Credit: Jay Mallin