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## WELCOME



Welcome everyone to an evening with Beethoven, Maestro Topilow, and the Firelands Symphony Orchestra!

The program features some of Beethoven's best works, ending our evening with the beautiful *Symphony No. 9*. We are excited to be joined on stage by the fabulous Firelands

Symphony Orchestra Chorale, directed by Michael Shirtz, and welcome back soloists Kirsten C. Kunkle, Tim Culver, and Tim LeFebvre. We also welcome soloist Elizabeth Mitchell, making her FSO debut!

This will be a very busy spring for the orchestra and chorale! Please keep a sharp eye out for our informational emails. If you are not on our email list and want to be informed about all of the exciting events coming up, please go to our website (<a href="www.firelandssymphony.com">www.firelandssymphony.com</a>) and sign up to receive the news!

Our next concert will take place at 4:00 pm. on Sunday, April 6, 2025, featuring the FSO Chorale and the inspiring *Fauré Requiem*. This concert will be at St. Mary's Catholic Church in Sandusky, Ohio, and we hope to see you there!

Again, thank you for coming and enjoy tonight's evening of Beethoven!

Ron Brooker, FSO Executive Director



### PODIUM NOTES



It is indeed a thrill to be performing one of the pillars of the symphonic repertoire, Beethoven's monumental *Symphony #9*!

To think that he was essentially completely deaf when he wrote it, so much so that at the first performance they had to motion to him to turn around to accept the applause of the audience, adds

to this incredible achievement.

Other works on this all-Beethoven concert include the *Leonore Overture #3* from his opera *Fidelio* and *Hallelujah* from the *Mount of Olives*, featuring the Firelands Symphony Orchestra Chorale.

The concept of adding four solo vocalists and a chorus to a symphony was truly a novelty in 1824. Our outstanding guest singers, Kirsten C. Kunkle (soprano), Elizabeth Mitchell (alto), Tim Culver (tenor), and Tim LeFebvre (bass) in conjunction with our chorale, will be adding their glowing voices to this masterpiece.

There is a wonderful connection between the story of Fidelio and the ninth symphony. In the opera, Leonore heroically saves her husband who has been wrongly detained. In the text of the symphony, Beethoven portrays the value of a true and loving wife.

Written in 1785, Friederich Schiller's *Ode to Joy*, the text used by Beethoven in the final movement, maintains that equality, freedom, and brotherhood should exist for all mankind. This ideal was brilliantly perpetuated by Beethoven in the ninth symphony.

We look forward to presenting Beethoven's magnificent masterpiece!

Carl Topilow, Music Director and Conductor

## CARL TOPILOW



During Carl Topilow's tenure as the Firelands Symphony Orchestra's Music Director and Conductor, the orchestra has seen a dramatic improvement in the orchestra's quality, a significant rise in subscriptions and the appearance of world class soloists to our stage.

In addition to his work with the FSO, Topilow is Founding Conductor of the Cleveland Pops Orchestra, Conductor Laureate of the National Repertory Orchestra, a summer festival in Breckenridge, Colorado, and was named Faculty Emeritus at the Cleveland Institute of Music. He has served as principal pops conductor of the Toledo Symphony Orchestra, the Southwest Florida Symphony Orchestra, and the Mansfield Symphony Orchestra.

Topilow has performed as guest conductor with 132 different orchestras in 37 states and 12 foreign countries. This year, he will be hosting his fourth conducting workshop in Cleveland.

Topilow's wife Shirley is President and CEO of the Cleveland Pops Orchestra. Their daughter Emily is a marketing associate with the Cleveland Clinic, and their daughter Jenny is a violinist with the Charlotte Symphony Orchestra.

Carl's book, *The Orchestral Conductor's Career Handbook* published by Rowman and Littlefield, is now available through <a href="www.carltopilow.com">www.carltopilow.com</a> and <a href="www.rowman.com">www.rowman.com</a>.



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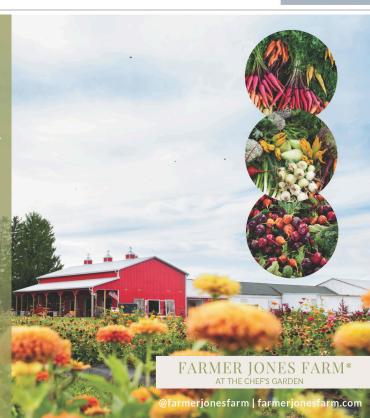
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## MICHAEL SHIRTZ



Michael Shirtz is a performer, educator, composer, and conductor, known for his versatility with jazz, contemporary, and classical music. Credited as a "songsmith," his vocals and arrangements feature jazz and singer-songwriter styles into his performances as both a solo artist and with his group, the Michael Shirtz Quartet. He has worked with such artists as Melissa Manchester, Evelyn Wright, and as music director for Maureen McGovern, among others. As an artist Shirtz is

affiliated with the Prima Music Foundation and the Musical Theatre Project. His shows include tributes to legendary artists in "As We've Learned It," "In Finding Faith," and his "Blue Skies" show and album released in 2018.

With a passion for fostering creativity and collaboration, Shirtz has emerged as a respected figure in both the jazz and choral communities as a conductor and educator. Shirtz has directed educational, theatre, masterworks, and pops music productions for choral, symphonic, and festival organizations. As a producer he has served with Tri-C JazzFest Cleveland, Jazz@8 Series, Jazz Education Network, and jazz in schools initiative. Shirtz is a music director for Lakeside Chautauqua and conductor of the Symphony Chorale with the Firelands Symphony Orchestra. He has written compositions for jazz, choir, theater, and extended works such as the cantata *The Solemn Blessings*, the musical *Headliner*, and *To Rise Above: A Journey of a Tuskegee Airman*.

Shirtz currently serves on faculty with The Ohio State University School of Music where he teaches applied and jazz voice. He has served on the faculties of Capital University, Heidelberg University, director-in-residence at Pellissippi State-Knoxville, and Terra State Community College where he held the positions of lead faculty and dean. Shirtz is a member of ASCAP, American Choral Directors Association, African American Jazz Caucus, and the National Association of Teachers of Singing. Shirtz received a Bachelor of Music in Jazz Studies from Capital University and Master of Music in Conducting from California State University, Los Angeles.



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## **GUEST ARTISTS**

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#### KIRSTEN C. KUNKLE, SOPRANO

Lauded as the leading Native American soprano in today's classical music world, Dr. Kirsten C. Kunkle is a voting citizen of the Mvskoke (Muscogee) Nation. She has been hailed as an outstanding singing actress with a voice that has been described as beautiful, ethereal, powerful, fiery, and bewitching. Recently, she made her Kennedy Center

debut with PostClassical Ensemble singing Barber's *Knoxville: Summer of 1915*, Jerod Impichchaachaaha' Tate's *Hymn*, and *Mvskoke Lullaby* with her daughter. She also recently created the role of Ipp'osi' in the first Native American tribal language (Chickasaw) opera in the world premiere of Tate's *Loksi' Shaali'*. Kirsten is the Co-Founder and Artistic Director of Wilmington Concert Opera, a women and minority led opera company in Wilmington, Delaware. Please visit <a href="https://www.kirstenckunkle.com">www.kirstenckunkle.com</a> for more information.



#### **ELIZABETH MITCHELL, ALTO**

Elizabeth is thrilled to make her Firelands Symphony debut. A versatile performer, Elizabeth has sung nationally with opera companies including Ohio Light Opera, Detroit Opera, Toledo Opera, Opera Western Reserve, and as a concert soloist with organizations including the Toledo Choral Society, Orchestra Sono, Michigan Philharmonic, and the

Dodworth Saxhorn Band. Internationally, Elizabeth has sung with Opera on Tap in Berlin, Germany and Oper Im Park in St. Anton am Arlberg, Austria. Favorite past operatic roles include Suzuki in *Madama Butterfly*, Dorabella in *Cosí fan tutte*, Mrs. Grose in *The Turn of the Screw*, Ruth in *The Pirates of Penzance*, and Die Knusperhexe and Die Mutter in *Hänsel und Gretel*. Ms. Mitchell received her Bachelor of Music degree from the University of Utah and her Master of Music degree from the University of Michigan, both in Vocal Performance and with scholarship.

## GUEST ARTISTS

#### SPONSORED BY:





#### TIMOTHY CULVER, TENOR

Tenor Timothy Culver has been described as having "a rich but penetrating tenor" and that he "faces florid tenor writing with a fearless vivacity." Since his professional debut in 2003, he has performed over forty different stage roles. Equally at home in both operatic and musical theatre works, Mr. Culver has performed with Atlanta Opera, Ann

Arbor Symphony, Orlando Philharmonic Orchestra, The Boston Landmarks Orchestra, Cleveland Opera Theater, Canton Symphony Orchestra, Porthouse Theatre, Akron Symphony, Nightingale Opera Theatre, Bar Harbor Music Festival and the Cleveland Orchestra. Currently, Mr. Culver is Professor of Voice in the Hugh A. Glauser School of Music at Kent State University, where he earned both his Bachelor and Master of Vocal Performance degrees. He resides in Stow, Ohio with his wife and three children.



#### **TIMOTHY LEFEBVRE, BASS**

Nationally acclaimed baritone Timothy LeFebvre has wideranging experience from the operatic stage to the concert hall. Recent performances include Haydn's *Creation* with State College Choral Society, Handel's *Messiah* with Susquehanna Valley Chorale, Dvorak's *Te Deum* with Wichita Symphony Orchestra, Handel's *Messiah* and Saint-

Saens' Christmas Oratorio with Indianapolis Chamber Orchestra, Vaughan-Williams' Dona nobis pacem with Symphoria (Syracuse, NY), Jesse Jones' Of Daylight & Night, Liptak's Ancient Songs, Barber's Dover Beach, and Ravel's Trois Poemes de Stephane Mallarmé at Oberlin Conservatory, Dett's The Ordering of Moses at Oberlin Conservatory, Mendelssohn's Elijah with New Dominion Chorale (Washington, DC), Brahms' Requiem with Hamilton College, and Bach's Saint John Passion with Spoleto Festival USA. Mr. LeFebvre is currently Professor of Voice at Oberlin Conservatory of Music.

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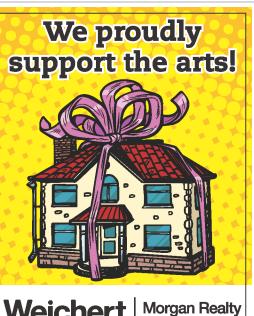
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## CONCERT PROGRAM

#### Beethoven's Ninth | March 22, 2025

#### The Firelands Symphony Orchestra & Chorale

Carl Topilow, Music Director & Conductor Michael Shirtz, Chorale Director Domenico Boyagian, Conducting Assistant

#### **Guest Vocalists:**

Kirsten C. Kunkle (soprano), Elizabeth Mitchell (alto), Timothy Culver (tenor), and Timothy LeFebvre (bass)

Leonore Overture No. 3 in C Major, op. 72b.....Ludwig van Beethoven

**Hallelujah** from **Christ on the Mount of Olives**.....Ludwig van Beethoven

The Firelands Symphony Chorale

#### **INTERMISSION**

Symphony No. 9 in D Minor, op. 125.....Ludwig van Beethoven

- I. Allegro ma non troppo, un poco maestoso
- II. Molto vivace
- III. Adagio molto e cantabile
- IV. Finale

The Firelands Symphony Chorale

Kirsten C. Kunkle (soprano), Elizabeth Mitchell (alto), Timothy Culver (tenor), and Timothy LeFebvre (bass)



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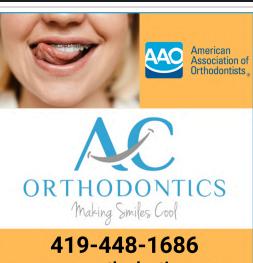


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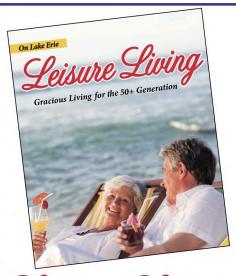
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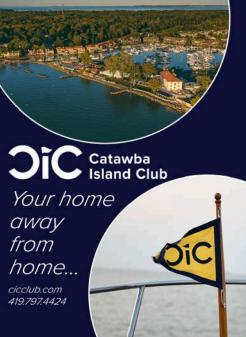
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