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*Great Performances* Presents the World Premiere of Leonard Bernstein’s Kaddish Symphony from Chicago Symphony Orchestra Conducted by Marin Alsop Monday, August 21 on PBS

Features soprano Janai Brugger and actor Jaye Ladymore as narrator

**Synopsis:**

Performed from Highland Park’s **Ravinia Festival**, ***Great Performances*** presents legendary composer Leonard Bernstein’s Kaddish symphony featuring the talent of Uniting voices (formerly Chicago Children’s Choir), **Chicago Symphony Chorus** and the **Chicago Symphony Orchestra.** Led by famed conductor and Bernstein protégé **Marin Alsop**, the work includes music and spoken narrative segments voiced by narrator **Jaye Ladymore** (“Chicago Med”) and sung by soprano soloist **Janai Brugger** (*Great Performances at the Met: Medea*). Recorded July 2022, the symphony examines questions of humanity and faith, exploring the complicated nature of a higher power who governs mortality. ***Great Performances: Leonard Bernstein’s Kaddish Symphony*** premieres Monday, August 21 at 9 p.m. ET on PBS ([check local listings](http://www.pbs.org/tv_schedules/)), [pbs.org/gperf](http://www.pbs.org/gperf) and the [PBS app.](https://www.pbs.org/pbs-video-app/)

**Talent:**

* Marin Alsop – Conductor
* Janai Brugger – Soprano Soloist
* Jaye Ladymore – Narrator
* Chicago Symphony Orchestra
* Chicago Symphony Chorus
* Uniting Voices (formerly Chicago Children’s Choir)
* Leonard Bernstein – Composer
* Matthew Diamond – Television Director

**Noteworthy Facts:**

* Originally composed in 1963, composer Leonard Bernstein made revisions to his Kaddish symphony in 1977 which included some cuts, rewrites of both the music and spoken text, and allowed for the speaker to be either a man or woman.
* In the Jewish religion, the Kaddish is the name of the prayer chanted at funerals and at synagogue services, yet there’s no mention of death in the prayer. Instead, it mentions “life” three times. In his symphony, Bernstein plays on the prayer’s dualism: Its reputation as a requiem, and its celebration of life in both the music and spoken text.
* The Chicago Symphony Orchestra has been a regular guest at the Ravinia Festival since 1905 and made it its summer residence in 1936. Each year, the orchestra headlines more than a dozen concerts over six weeks.

**Series overview:**

For more than 50 years on PBS, ***Great Performances***has provided an unparalleled showcase of the best in all genres of the performing arts, serving as America’s most prestigious and enduring broadcaster of cultural programming. Showcasing a diverse range of artists from around the world, the series has earned 67 Emmy Awards and six Peabody Awards. The [***Great Performances*** website](https://www.pbs.org/wnet/gperf/) hosts exclusive videos, interviews, photos, full episodes and more. The series is produced by The WNET Group. ***Great Performances***is available for streaming concurrent with broadcast on [PBS.org](http://pbs.org/) and the [PBS App,](https://www.pbs.org/pbs-video-app/) available on iOS, Android, Roku streaming devices, Apple TV, Android TV, Amazon Fire TV, Samsung Smart TV, Chromecast and VIZIO.

**Production credits:**

Directed for television by Matthew Diamond and produced by Bernhard Fleischer. ***Great Performances: Leonard Bernstein’s Kaddish Symphony*** is a production of Bernhard Fleischer Moving Images and The WNET Group in collaboration with Ravinia Festival and Chicago Symphony Orchestra Association. For ***Great Performances***, Julie Leonard is producer, Bill O’Donnell is series producer and David Horn is executive producer.

**Funding:**

Series funding for ***Great Performances*** is provided by The Joseph & Robert Cornell Memorial Foundation, the Anna-Maria and Stephen Kellen Foundation, the LuEsther T. Mertz Charitable Trust, the Thea Petschek Iervolino Foundation, Jody and John Arnhold, the Abra Prentice Foundation LLC, The Starr Foundation, The Philip and Janice Levin Foundation, the Jack Lawrence Trust, Seton J. Melvin, Sue and Edgar Wachenheim III, Leni and Peter May, the Estate of Worthington Mayo-Smith, Ellen and James S. Marcus, and PBS.

**Websites:**[http://pbs.org/gperf](http://www.pbs.org/gperf), [http://facebook.com/GreatPerformances](http://www.facebook.com/GreatPerformances), [@GPerfPBS](http://twitter.com/gperfpbs), <http://youtube.com/greatperformancespbs>, [giphy.com/great-performances](https://giphy.com/great-performances/) #GreatPerformancesPBS

**About The WNET Group**

[The WNET Group](http://wnet.org/) creates inspiring media content and meaningful experiences for diverse audiences nationwide. It is the community-supported home of New York’s [THIRTEEN](http://thirteen.org/) – America’s flagship PBS station – [WLIW21](http://wliw.org/), THIRTEEN PBSKids, WLIW World and Create; [NJ PBS](https://www.mynjpbs.org/), New Jersey’s statewide public television network; Long Island’s only NPR station WLIW-FM; [ALL ARTS](http://allarts.org/), the arts and culture media provider; newsroom [NJ Spotlight News;](https://www.njspotlightnews.org/) and FAST channel PBS Nature. Through these channels and streaming platforms, The WNET Group brings arts, culture, education, news, documentary, entertainment and DIY programming to more than five million viewers each month. The WNET Group’s award-winning productions include signature PBS series ***Nature***, ***Great Performances***, ***American Masters*** and ***Amanpour and Company*** and trusted local news programs ***MetroFocus*** and ***NJ Spotlight News******with Briana Vannozzi***. Inspiring curiosity and nurturing dreams, The WNET Group’s award-winning Kids’ Media and Education team produces the PBS KIDS series ***Cyberchase***, interactive ***Mission US*** history games, and resources for families, teachers and caregivers. A leading nonprofit public media producer for more than 60 years, The WNET Group presents and distributes content that fosters lifelong learning, including multiplatform initiatives addressing poverty, jobs, economic opportunity, social justice, understanding and the environment. Through Passport, station members can stream new and archival programming anytime, anywhere. The WNET Group represents the best in public media. Join us.

**About Ravinia Festival** **Ⓡ**

Ravinia believes in the power of shared, live-music moments to inspire ourselves and the world. Beyond presenting outstanding performances by the world’s greatest musicians, the not-for-profit’s mission to develop broader, more diverse audiences and performers in the music industry can be seen through its community engagement and education programs like Reach Teach Play and the Steans Music Institute. Together, Ravinia’s initiatives serve tens of thousands of students, families, and young professional musicians.

The 36-acre park is home to North America’s longest-running outdoor music festival and its most artistically diverse. Over 100 different events featuring a mix of classical, rock, pop, jazz, R&B, indie, and country performers make up a typical summer season across two open-air and two indoor stages, including the annual residence of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. Guests can bring their own picnics, including food and liquor. A full range of dining options is available at the park, from casual carts to fine dining. Ravinia performances occur rain or shine. Audiences are invited to come early to enjoy various pre-concert activities, including the festival’s [sculpture tour](https://sculpture.ravinia.org/), the interactive musical playground [KidsLawn](https://www.ravinia.org/KidConcerts#kidslawn), and the [Ravinia Music Box](https://www.ravinia.org/RaviniaMusicBox).

Ravinia is the only private train stop in Illinois, with Metra’s Union Pacific North line stopping at the Grand Entrance. Since 2021, in collaboration with Metra, all trains on the Union Pacific Line honor Ravinia tickets as train fares; patrons can show their dated concert e-ticket for a free train ride to and from the park on the day of the event. The festival is located about 20 miles north of Chicago at Green Bay and Lake Cook Roads in Highland Park. Onsite parking is limited, and the festival operates a free park-and-ride shuttle bus service to nearby lots along the train line.

The safety of audiences, artists, staff and the community is Ravinia’s top priority. Managed by expert guidance, safety protocols are practiced and recurrently updated to ensure best practices; a variety of specialized programs and technology are engaged to ensure the venue is accessible and safe for all its patrons.

Visit [Ravinia.org](http://www.ravinia.org) for the most up-to-date programming and protocols. Tickets are on sale now.

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