



MEDIA CONTACT:

Jason Rapp, Communications Director
SC Philharmonic
JasonRapp@SCPhilharmonic.com
www.SCPhilharmonic.com



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**Philharmonic season finale first Certified S.C. Grown event
- culture and agriculture unite to showcase the state's excellent quality of life**

COLUMBIA, S.C. – The South Carolina Philharmonic's season finale "Ode to Joy" is now a "Certified S.C. Grown" event by the S.C. Department of Agriculture, the first such designation for a cultural event in the state.

Sponsored by Blanchard Machinery, "Ode to Joy" will be presented at 7:30 p.m. Saturday, April 28, 2012 at the Koger Center for the Arts.

Music Director Morihiko Nakahara has unofficially billed the Certified S.C. Grown season finale as a "Celebration of South Carolina, with an emphasis on the wonderful group of musicians and vocalists who live and work in the Palmetto State."

The certification is a result of collaboration among the S.C. Department of Agriculture, BuyCertifiedSC.com, and the SCP. "Ode to Joy" is a Palmetto State-centric concert sponsored by Blanchard Machinery that includes:

- Charleston-based, USC-educated composer Edward Hart's Under an Indigo Sky (Violin Concerto), which is considered a "musical homage" to our state that depicts Columbia's rivers, the Upstate's mountains and the Lowcountry ocean breezes;
- Charleston Symphony Concertmaster Yuriy Bekker performing as guest soloist for the concerto,
- and Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, "Choral," which features vocal soloists Janet Hopkins, Amber Opheim, Daniel Stein and David Templeton and the Columbia Choral Society and Coker College Singers, all with South Carolina ties.

The distinct, South Carolina flavor of these elements led to "Ode to Joy" being the first "certified" cultural event in the five-year history of the Certified S.C. Grown initiative. Certified S.C. Grown" is a cooperative effort among producers, processors, wholesalers, retailers and the SCDA to brand and promote South Carolina products so consumers easily identify, find and buy South Carolina products.

“It’s great that we are now putting our Certified S.C. stamp on a South Carolina cultural event,” Commissioner of Agriculture Hugh Weathers said. “Culture is a word common with agriculture. During this downturn in the economy, it’s more important than ever that we continue to cultivate and nurture the commerce surrounding our state’s farmers and artists,” he said. “They are the ones who bring a quality of life to the state unmatched by any other segment of the economy. That quality of life is one of the reasons that businesses relocate and expand here.”

Representatives from Certified S.C. Grown and BuyCertifiedSC.com will be on hand at “Ode to Joy” to greet concertgoers and tell more about the program. Concert tickets are \$23 to \$53 and are available through Capitol Tickets online at www.capitoltickets.com, by phone at 803.251.2222 or at the new Koger Center Box Office at Park and Greene streets.

ABOUT CERTIFIED S.C.

The South Carolina Department of Agriculture’s Certified SC program is an exciting cooperative effort among producers, processors, wholesalers, retailers and the SCDA, to brand and promote SC produce and products.

The program is based on the idea that when presented with the option, South Carolinians will buy local because – Nothing’s Fresher, Nothing’s Finer than South Carolina products and produce. Additional information about the SC Department of Agriculture and its branding programs, including a Certified SC Grown directory, may be found online at www.agriculture.sc.gov.

ABOUT BUycERTIFIEDSC.COM

BuyCertifiedSC.com is a company cooperating with the S.C. Department of Agriculture to increase loyalty to the Certified SC Grown program. “We sell made in South Carolina branded apparel, link to Certified SC supporters’ websites and tell people about members on our KnowSC page,” said Ken Carey, owner of BuyCertifiedSC.com.

ABOUT THE SOUTH CAROLINA PHILHARMONIC

An independent 501(c) (3) non-profit organization, the South Carolina Philharmonic entertains, educates, enriches and excites diverse audiences throughout the Midlands and beyond since 1964. The introduction of Music Director Morihiko Nakahara in 2008/2009 ushered in a New Era of Artistic Excellence that is allowing the orchestra to move forward and become the Midlands pre-eminent performing arts group.

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