Omaha Symphony director will be June 7 ‘Face’ honoree

Thomas Wilkins will be recognized in first ‘Face’ event in nearly 19 months

By Tom O’Connor
Communications Committee

After a pandemic hiatus of nearly 19 months, the signature event of the Omaha Press Club – the “Face on the Barroom Floor” – will return on Monday, June 7, when Thomas Wilkins, longtime music director of the Omaha Symphony, will be honored.

Wilkins, who has served as music director for the symphony since 2005, will be the 164th “Face on the Barroom Floor.” The last “Face” event was held in November 2019 when the father-son communications duo of Jim and Todd Murphy was recognized.

“The ‘Face’ event is synonymous with the Omaha Press Club,” said Roger Humphries, OPC president and chair of the Face on the Barroom Floor Committee. “It’s time to get back on the horse. By June, we anticipate that just about everyone who attends the ‘Face’ event will have been vaccinated. We are excited to recognize Thomas and are 100% confident that it will be an outstanding event, and most importantly – a safe event.”

Validated parking returns to DoubleTree garage

Effective immediately, the Omaha Press Club is no longer offering validated parking in the Central City Garage, located just west of the First National Bank building.

Instead, validated parking again is available at the DoubleTree Hotel Garage east of the main hotel entrance.

Self-pay parking remains available in the Central City Garage. Use one of the ticket machines near the elevators in the garage to insert your entry ticket and pay for an exit ticket or pay at the exit gate when leaving (credit card only).

OPC will provide two hours of free parking at the DoubleTree Garage at lunchtime and dinnertime for club members. Bring your parking ticket to the club for validation.

The primary entrance to the DoubleTree Garage is closed while the hotel’s driveway circle is under construction. To access the secondary garage entrance, turn right into the First National Bank drive-thru just west of 15th and Dodge Streets. Stay to the right and go up the ramp to park.

To get to the club while the FNB building is still under lockdown, walk outside of the parking garage to the first-floor bank entrance at the northwest corner of 16th and Dodge Streets. Press the button on the black box just outside of the revolving door and say, “Omaha Press Club.” Security will buzz you in.

Continue walking west past the security desk to the elevators. Only two elevators go to the 22nd floor. They are on the south side of the lobby. If you take any of the other elevators, get off on the 21st floor and take the spiral staircase one flight up to the club.

(Note: Only the express elevators are available after 6 p.m. on weekdays and at all times on weekends.)

Forum will explore ‘Restorative Justice’

By Gary Willis
Communications Committee


The Community Justice Center is headquartered in Lincoln with an office in Omaha. It defines “Restorative Justice” as a response to crime that focuses on addressing the harm suffered by victims, holding offenders accountable and collectively dealing with the consequences of crime. This process rehabilitates offenders, heals victims, and rebuilds communities.

At the OPC Noon Forum, Jones will share how simply changing the language within our criminal justice system can produce invaluable outcomes. The outcomes can result in reduced crime and prison (jail) populations.

For more than 27 years, Jones has demonstrated restorative justice to justice-involved individuals throughout prisons and probation districts across Nebraska. He has presented his evidence-based brief, “Restorative Justice Intervention,” at probation/parole conferences around the country, and his work has been published in the International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology.

Jim’s book, “Giving Back,” shares his life journey through crime, incarceration and his re-entry back into his community.

The OPC program begins at noon and continues until 1 p.m. Lunch, at $17 per person, is served beginning at 11:30 a.m. Call 402-345-8008 for reservations. Non-Press Club members are welcome.
Communications Committee
By Angella Arndt

Find out at June 17 Forum

People attending will be required to wear masks when entering the First National Bank building. Once they enter the Press Club, they will be able to remove their masks to allow for eating and drinking. People are encouraged to maintain social distancing.

Wilkins will conclude his tenure with the Omaha Symphony on June 12 when he conducts his final concert. Ankush Kumar Bahl will succeed Wilkins as music director of the Omaha Symphony.

“As we draw near the end of Thomas Wilkins’ extraordinary 16-year tenure as our music director, the Omaha Symphony is incredibly proud and pleased that he’ll be honored as the Omaha Press Club’s newest ‘Face on the Barroom Floor,’ ” said Jennifer Boomgaarden, president & CEO of the Omaha Symphony. “This fun and fitting tribute is a wonderful way to acknowledge the indelible impact Maestro Wilkins has had on our orchestra and our community. We look forward to a festive evening celebrating a truly great conductor, outstanding gentleman, and fair-to-middling golfer.”

A native of Norfolk, Virginia, Wilkins is a graduate of the Shenandoah Conservatory of Music in Virginia and the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston. He is professor of music and Henry A. Upper Chair of Orchestral Conducting at the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music.

In addition to his role with the Omaha Symphony, Wilkins is principal conductor of the Hollywood Bowl Orchestra and is artistic advisor for education and community engagement for the Boston Symphony.

Previously, he has held conducting positions with the Detroit Symphony, the Florida Orchestra (Tampa Bay), and the Richmond (Virginia) Symphony. He also has served on the music faculties of North Park University (Chicago), the University of Tennessee in Chattanooga, and Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond.

During his conducting career, he has led orchestras throughout the United States, including the New York Philharmonic, the Chicago Symphony, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the Cincinnati Symphony and the National Symphony. He also has guest conducted the Philadelphia and Cleveland orchestras, the symphonies of Atlanta, Dallas, Houston, Baltimore, San Diego and Utah, and the Buffalo and Rochester philharmonics, as well as the Grant Park Music Festival in Chicago.

Devoted to promoting a lifelong enthusiasm for music, Boomgaarden said Wilkins “brings energy and commitment to audiences of all ages and is a master at communicating and connecting with audiences.”

Following his highly successful first season with the Boston Symphony, the Boston Globe named him among the “Best People and Ideas of 2011.”

Other honors include: the Outstanding Artist Award through the Nebraska Arts Council/Governor’s Arts Awards; the Leonard Bernstein Lifetime Achievement Award for the Elevation of Music in Society conferred by Boston’s Longy School of Music; the Dick and Mary Holland Leadership Award from the Omaha Symphony; and the Dreamer Award from the Virginia Symphony.

Currently, Wilkins serves as chairman of the board for the Raymond James Charitable Endowment Fund and as national ambassador for the nonprofit World Pediatric Project in Richmond, which provides children throughout Central America and the Caribbean with critical surgical and diagnostic care.

Wilkins and his wife, Sheri-Lee, are the parents of twin daughters, Erica and Nicole.

FACE ON THE BARROOM FLOOR – THOMAS WILKINS

WHEN: MONDAY, JUNE 7 – RECEPTION, 5:30 P.M.; DINNER, 6:30 P.M.; ROAST, 8 P.M.
COST: $60 FOR OPC MEMBERS; $70 FOR NON-MEMBERS
RSVP: CALL THE OPC AT 402-345-8008. MEMBERS CAN CHARGE TO THEIR OPC ACCOUNT. NON-MEMBERS NEED TO PROVIDE THEIR CREDIT CARD INFORMATION.

ROASTERS FOR THOMAS WILKINS
EMCEE – TRENTEN P. BAUSCH, PARTNER, CLINE WILLIAMS; OMAHA SYMPHONY GOVERNING MEMBERS
BRUCE CARPENTER, SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, HDR, INC.; FORMER MEMBER, OMAHA SYMPHONY GOVERNING MEMBERS
DAVE DIAMOND, RETIRED CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER, MUTUAL OF OMAHA; OMAHA SYMPHONY BOARD OF DIRECTORS
LANCE FRITZ, CHAIRMAN, PRESIDENT & CEO, UNION PACIFIC; FORMER MEMBER, OMAHA SYMPHONY BOARD OF DIRECTORS
DAVID SLOSBURG, SPRUCE CAPITAL GROUP; CHAIR, OMAHA SYMPHONY BOARD OF DIRECTORS

What’s happening in Omaha?
Find out at June 17 Forum

By Angella Arndt
Communications Committee

The Noon Education Forum on Thursday, June 17 will feature David Brown, president and CEO of the Greater Omaha Chamber of Commerce, as he speaks about “What’s Happening in Omaha.”

The chamber is one of the largest, most highly accredited chambers in the nation with a five-star accreditation by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, placing it in the top 1% of chambers nationally.

Noon Forum lunch service begins at 11:30 a.m. for $17 per person. The program starts at noon and concludes at 1 p.m.

Call 402-345-8008 for reservations or email Christine Villamonte at opcchristine@gmail.com. Non-Press Club members are welcome.

College Baseball Opening Ceremonies Fireworks Buffet
June 18, 2021
6:30 p.m. to 9 p.m.
$25 Adults, $15 Children

Buffet Menu
Carved Beef Brisket
Southern Fried Chicken
BBQ Pork Baby Back Ribs, Vienna All-Beef Hot Dogs
Tossed Salad, Deviled Eggs
Coleslaw, Signature Baked Beans
Corn on the Cob, Potato Salad
Whipped Potatoes & Gravy

Desserts
Brownie à la Mode
Strawberry Cheesecake
A wine time was had by all

By Angella Arndt
Communications Committee

Approximately 57 guests attended the Quarterly Wine Dinner on Friday, April 23.

Diners enjoyed a delicious five-course meal, including tenderloin steaks served with pan-seared scallops and a delicate Burgundy chocolate soufflé.

Republic National Distributors in Omaha paired a wine with each course, featuring several 1924 spirit barrel-aged wines.

Thank you to Steve, Christine and their team for an enjoyable and delicious evening. Photos by Angella Arndt.

PHONE 402-345-8008 FOR RESERVATIONS

Thomas Wilkins
Face on the Barroom Floor
Monday, June 7, 2021
Members $60 • Non-Members $70
5:30 p.m. Social, No-Host Bar
6:30 p.m. Dinner

Hors d’oeuvres
Assorted Canapes

Salad
OPC Signature
Thunderbird Salad

Entrée
OPC Filet with Mâître d’Butter
Fresh Asparagus Citron
Loaded Twice Baked Potato

Desserts
Chocolate Mousse Framboise

Mother’s Day Brunch
Sunday, May 9, 2021
Two settings: 10 a.m. and 12:30 p.m.
Adults $25 • Children 10 and Under $15

Carving Station
Steamship Round of Beef with Horseradish
Chantilly & Red Wine Au Jus
Old School Pineapple-Glazed Ham

Entrées
Chicken Crepes Supreme
Baked Tilapia Buerre Blanc
Eggs Benedict
Risotto • Lyonnais Potatoes
Seasonal Vegetables

A La Carte
Build-Your-Own Omelet • Multi-Topping
Pancake Bar

Salad Display
Thunderbird Salad, Imported Cheese & Antipasto, Coleslaw,
Potato Salad, Deviled Eggs,
Smoked Salmon Chaud Froid,
Fresh Fruit Display
Fresh Baked Pastries • Breakfast Breads
Pecan Rolls

Desserts
New York-style Cheesecake with Strawberries
Chocolate Driscoll Strawberries
Warm Peach Cobbler with French Vanilla Ice Cream
Sticky Buns, Chocolate-Dipped Driscoll Strawberries & Homemade Coffee Cake

Father's Day Steak Grill
Saturday, June 19, 2021
5:30 p.m. - 8 p.m.
Adults: $27 • Children: $16

From the Kitchen
à la Carte Choice:
Prime Rib of Beef • Ribeye
New York Strip • Club Steak

On the Buffet
Vienna Hot Dogs • Baked Potatoes
Baked Beans • Corn-on-the-Cob
Potato Salad • Pasta Salad
Coleslaw • House Salad
Deviled Eggs

Desserts
Brownies • Strawberry Shortcake
Clubs members, your Omaha Press Club is gaining momentum as we emerge from the pandemic, but we do need you to use the restaurant.

Easter brunch attendance was the first good crowd we have had at the club since the onset of the pandemic. This was a sign of optimism for board members and management and a step in the right direction.

We do need members to use the club to get through the tough times many restaurants are having right now. Management limited each Easter Brunch seating to 70 guests, mostly so we could be attentive with our current limited staff.

If you are planning on attending the Mother’s Day Brunch, please make your reservations early so we can staff accordingly.

The April Noon Forum that featured the mayoral debate also had a good turnout with 67 guests. This is down from what would normally be a sellout of 150 or more for the event, but it is progress.

The quarterly wine dinner just last month had a decent turnout of 57, which is down from normal but trending upward again, with all having a great time. The next wine dinner is June 11, and this one is being hosted by Scott Voorhees and KFAB. This will be the first Gourmet Club event for KFAB since the onset of the pandemic. A normal crowd at the club for this event would be around 160, but I am anticipating more, so again RSVP early before the radio announcement is made.

Club management is continuing to open for lunch Monday through Friday and to offer our Thursday night Two-for-One Prime Rib Dinner. The restaurant will also open for parties of 10 or more any night of the week; just call Christine and plan your dinner.

Starting May 14, we will open the bar for Happy Hour Fridays from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. with discount drink prices and hors d’oeuvres. As demand increases, so will the hours we are open.

The board and management are planning many events for the upcoming year. Two big occasions will be the First Amendment Night and the Omaha Press Club 50th Anniversary. We will be setting dates and announcing details for both of those.

Other upcoming events include our Mother’s Day Brunch on May 9, the June 7 “Face on the Barroom Floor” featuring conductor Thomas Wilkins, the College Baseball Fireworks Buffet June 18 and Father’s Day Grill June 19, just to name a few.

Our calendar is wide open for private events and gatherings right now. If you need event space — whether for daytime or evening — please contact Christine at opcchristine@gmail.com. The Press Club is unique in comparison to other facilities. We require reservations and can accommodate social distancing with ease due to the layout of the restaurant. This is a value for dining out with regards to your health and safety.

The Curbside Friday Family Meal is still a popular option at the club. Christine and I would like to thank all the members who continue to order these meals, as well as the volunteers who help with the curbside pickup. Christine is especially thankful for gratuities.

Our Lunchtime Curbside meals can be picked up from the 10-minute parking area on Dodge Street (near the entrance of the DoubleTree Hotel), by selecting a time at the top of each hour: 11 a.m., noon, 1 p.m., and 2 p.m. These meals must be ordered online from our website the day before.

For Takeout, Delivery (within the FNBO buildings), or Curbside online ordering: https://www.toasttab.com/omahapressclub/v3.

Or click on the “Order Online” link in the top left corner of our website: https://omahapressclub.com/.

If dining in, the Press Club door is propped open during business hours for a “touchless” way to enter the club. Sanitizer stations are set up near each restroom.

FNBO is mandating that all employees wear face masks in common areas: lobbies, hallways and elevators. This is also the rule for members coming to the Press Club while in the common areas.

Our goal is precautions for all, as we operate the restaurant to serve our members, FNBO employees and building tenants. We look forward to seeing you!

To reach me during this time, email: opcdirector@gmail.com.

Thank you to all our members who continue to support the club during these difficult times.

See you at the club.

-Steve Villamonte, Executive Director

OPC hosts first mayoral debate

By Gary Willis
Communications Committee

Mayor Jean Stothert and challenger R.J. Neary sparred over properly repairing streets, public transportation, policing and handling of the pandemic on April 22 at the Omaha Press Club – the first of their debates preceding the May 11 city election.

Neary, a commercial real estate broker, said he had talked with engineers who told him that our roads would last longer using a better concrete mix and improving the drainage from them.

Stothert touted the development of the city’s plan to repave streets every 20 years since the funds are available from the voter-approved $200 million street bonds.

WOWT’s Brian Mastre moderated the debate that was sponsored by the Omaha Press Club. Replay of the debate can be found on WOWT’s website.

A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
**Committee Chairs**

**Communications**
Gary Willis, Cindy Workman

**Education**
Dr. Robert Meyers

**Executive Committee**
Roger Humphries, Tom Shatel, Bridget (Weide) Brooks and Dale Ervin

"Face on the Barroom Floor"
Roger Humphries

**Hall of Fame**
Woody Bradford

**Marketing / Membership**
Bridget (Weide) Brooks

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**2020-2022**

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- Woody Bradford: Houghton Bradford Whitted
- Bridget (Weide) Brooks: Image Building Communications
- Gary Willis: NP Dodge Real Estate
- Jeremy Maskel: Omaha Public Schools

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- Angela Arndt: Freelance Writer
- Chris Allen: UNO
- Todd Andrews: Salvation Army
- Liz Huska: Legislative Fiscal Office
- Mike McKnight: WOWT
- Dr. Robert Meyers: Retired

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**CANCELLATION POLICY:** All reservations must be cancelled 48 HOURS in advance.