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# May 14 marks Maestro MacKenzie's finale as NBSO music director

Maestro MacKenzie looks back over his productive decade with the NBSO

The retiring maestro will conduct a performance of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony May 14. The great composer's uplifting appeal for togetherness — capped off with the inspirational "Ode to Joy" — brings a fitting conclusion to David MacKenzie's tenure as head of the NBSO. The concert will also mark the end of the orchestra's 100th anniversary season.

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Dr. David MacKenzie recognizes Sippican Elementary School sixth grader Ruth Harris for composing a piece that the orchestra was about to play at a Young People's Concert. MacKenzie says he is particularly proud of the NBSO's education program during his tenure. JOHN SLADEWSKI/STANDARD-TIMES FILE/SCMG



Dr. David MacKenzie recognizes Sippican Elementary School sixth grader Ruth Harris for composing a piece that the orchestra was about to play at a Young People's Concert. MacKenzie says he is particularly proud of the NBSO's education program during his tenure. JOHN SLADEWSKI/STANDARD-TIMES FILE/SCMG



**By Keith Powers**  
Contributing writer

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## THE BOX OFFICE

What: New Bedford Symphony Orchestra

When: 7:30 p.m. May 14. Program repeats at 3 p.m. May 15 (with another conductor)

Where: Zeiterion ...

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growth both on- and offstage with the NBSO, leads the ensemble, four soloists, and the Back Bay Chorale in a performance of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. The great composer's uplifting appeal for togetherness — capped off with the inspirational "Ode to Joy" — brings a fitting conclusion to MacKenzie's tenure as head of the NBSO. The concert will also mark the end of the orchestra's 100th anniversary season.

"It's a nice way to finish the season, the centennial, and for me to put a period at the end of the paragraph," MacKenzie said on the phone from his home in Hawaii, where he has moved to pursue, along with future musical endeavors, his avocation as a permaculture farmer.

It's been a decade of progress for the NBSO. Stability onstage with his musicians — concertmaster Jesse Holstein, and many other players, have been with MacKenzie for his entire tenure — and in the administrative ranks — CEO David Prentiss has likewise been with the orchestra nearly the entire time — have had a positive impact.

And in SouthCoast schools, MacKenzie's influence should continue to be felt for generations. "If I've done anything unique here," he says, "it's that I was able to bring my particular passion for education to the organization. And that they've adopted it as a coequal mission."

MacKenzie is quick to share credit for this with Terry Wolkowicz, the NBSO's head of education (and current board chair). "My contributions may have made the orchestra better," he says. "But when Terry came along, there was a synergy. She is the finest curriculum innovator I've ever been

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around, and now there isn't a parallel program anywhere.

"The conductor of a regional orchestra has a profound responsibility," he says. "In most communities, the orchestra is the only connection that they have to classical music. And because of that, the music director is the primary music educator in the community.

"That has informed my career," he says. "You're not just here for the purpose of playing great concerts, but to grow artistically, and in a sustainable way."

Mackenzie refers not only to educational outreach, but also to the compositions that a conductor chooses to present.

"Too many conductors have a bucket list, and perform works that are part of that wish list," he says. "You see orchestras who are not ready for it playing pieces like 'Rite of Spring.' They might survive it, but it's not sustainable. You're not paying attention to how you got there, and how it provides you with new skills and insights."

Mackenzie's music career is far from over. He will maintain guest relationships with several orchestras in South America, which he has had for many years, and hopes to branch out to Asia and other places — "enjoying some travel for a change," he says.

For now, he will step back, plant 250 cacao trees on his farmland, and rejuvenate. He does not rule out taking another music directorship some day, but right now, "I'm not in any hurry," he says. "I think it's good to take a break. I've been able to do that at different times during my career, and I've always come back refreshed.

"I feel in some ways like I'm just hitting my stride musically," he admits. "It's the nature of the profession. As you live more and make more music, you're better able to make more music.

"But I think it is time for this orchestra to move to another leader. The committee process was a good one, and this is a really important exercise, a growing opportunity. Henry Fogel (former head of the American Symphony Orchestra League) once said that if you've had the same conductor for 10 years, you're probably not doing something right.

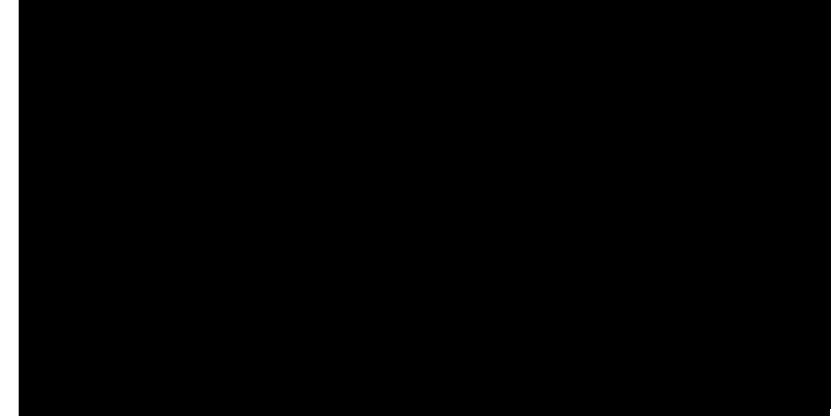
"But honestly, I do feel a little like a parachutist, getting ready to jump. I'm thinking to myself, 'Why am I jumping out of this perfectly good airplane?'"

The NBSO will be joined for the finale by the Back Bay Chorale and four distinguished soloists: Karen Slack (soprano), Abigail Fischer (mezzo), Yeghishe Manucharyan (tenor), and David Kravitz (baritone).

The program repeats at Sanders Theatre in Cambridge at 3 p.m. May 15. Scott Allen Jarrett, director of the Back Bay Chorale, will conduct the Sanders Theatre performance. Both concerts begin with Bernstein's "Chichester Psalms," for orchestra, chorus and boy soprano (Colin Lopus in New Bedford, and Owen David Lewis in Cambridge).

For information and tickets visit [www.nbsymphony.org](http://www.nbsymphony.org) or call the Z box office at 508-994-2900.

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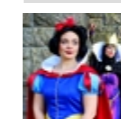
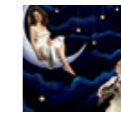
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