

MEDIA RELEASE

Controversial cultural commentator to deliver Sydney Symphony 75th Anniversary Stuart Challender Lecture

Monday 27 August, 6.30pm – 7.30pm
Sydney Town Hall. A free event



Sydney, 30 July 2007 – In the music world, the name Norman Lebrecht is synonymous with controversy. Whether discussing his views on the rise and fall of the classical recording industry or how Australia's cultural landscape has become a 'suburban dullness', there's no shortage of debate. Now it's Sydney's chance to hear Norman Lebrecht live in a special free event when he delivers the Sydney Symphony 75th Anniversary Stuart Challender Lecture, proudly supported by City of Sydney, energising arts and culture in our city and Arts NSW.

In a talk titled 'Classical Music – the State of the Art in the 21st Century', Lebrecht will speak about the devastating impact of technological change and post-9/11 politics on the cultural economy and how the arts can plan for recovery, especially in Australia. Sydney audiences are guaranteed a no-holds-barred talk about the current challenges facing orchestras and opera companies.

According to Sydney Symphony Managing Director Libby Christie, while Lebrecht sometimes comes under fire for his controversial statements, his analysis of the music scene has the undeniable air of authority that comes from an insider's understanding of the machinations and personalities of the industry's key players.

"Norman Lebrecht is one of the most widely read music critics and cultural commentators in the world and we are thrilled he will be delivering the Orchestra's annual Stuart Challender Lecture," says Christie.

"We are so proud that in our 75th anniversary year, the Sydney Symphony is again proving that it's at the forefront of the Australian classical music scene, not only by working with the crème de la crème of international musicians, but by generating debate on the subject of music and culture. And there's no better instigator of debate around the arts than Norman Lebrecht," adds Christie.

Lebrecht first gained widespread notoriety in the early 1990s with his acidic critique of modern conductors, *The Maestro Myth*, in which he lifts the lid off the world of conducting, a world he considers to be "populated by geniuses and charlatans and preyed upon by the greatest power brokers in the entertainment industry". His latest book, *Maestros, Masterpieces and Madness: The secret life and shameful death of the classical record industry* is gaining world-wide notoriety for its frank account of the rise and fall of the classical record industry.

Recently, Lebrecht has come under fire in Australia for his comments on Australian arts executives taking up jobs in the UK referring to them as “Aussie misfits” and for an article criticising the appointment of Australian Jonathan Mills as Director of the Edinburgh International Festival.

Lebrecht is the author of 11 books and is Assistant Editor of the London Evening Standard and presenter of lebrecht.live on BBC Radio.

The Stuart Challender Fund was established by the Sydney Symphony’s late-Chief Conductor and Artistic Director Stuart Challender as a way of providing training opportunities for Australian conductors and to assist in bringing leading international conductors and people of note in the classical music industry to Australia. Past presenters of the lecture include Leonard Slatkin, Michael Steinberg, Simone Young, Marin Alsop and Edo de Waart.

Norman Lebrecht’s visit to Australia is with the support of the Melbourne Writers Festival.

To secure tickets for this free event, email challender@sydneysymphony.com with your name, postal address and phone number, or phone (02) 8215 4600 (Mon-Fri 9am-5pm). Space is limited and tickets will be allocated on a first come, first served basis, so don’t delay.

For further information regarding interviews and photos, please contact:

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