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SYDNEY SYMPHONY SET TO RECORD TWO-YEAR MAHLER CYCLE WITH CONDUCTOR VLADIMIR ASHKENAZY

"For me, there's no point trying to describe Mahler's music, because genius is beyond description. The thing is to listen, and I hope you will join me on this journey, to experience this musical odyssey." Vladimir Ashkenazy

The Sydney Symphony today announced plans to record its two-year Mahler cycle (2010–2011) with Principal Conductor and Artistic Advisor Vladimir Ashkenazy. The recordings will be available for international distribution on the Sydney Symphony Live label and in Japan and other Asian markets on the Octavia label, a major recording partner of the Sydney Symphony.

According to Sydney Symphony Managing Director Rory Jeffes, this is a significant occasion in the Orchestra's history.

"Vladimir Ashkenazy has never recorded a Mahler cycle and we are thrilled he has chosen the Sydney Symphony for this wonderful project. This recording endeavour will see the documentation of all the symphonies plus a significant selection of Mahler's orchestral songs including the 'Song of the Earth' – all recorded live in performance at the Sydney Symphony's home, the Sydney Opera House."

The project has received praise from many around Australia including former Prime Minister Paul Keating: "A complete recorded cycle of Mahler's symphonies is rarely undertaken over a short period of time, with the one orchestra and one conductor. It is not simply a milestone for our conductor and our orchestra, but it also will be an enormous event for the Sydney Symphony's audience and patrons. The complete recordings will represent a significant chapter for the orchestra with Vladimir Ashkenazy and will place them on the bookshelf of history."

The Sydney Symphony's 2010 Season, Vladimir Ashkenazy's second as Principal Conductor and Artistic Advisor, marks the start of the Mahler cycle as well as the 150th anniversary of the birth of Mahler. The cycle concludes in 2011 when the world marks the centenary of the composer's death.

Six separate programs make up the 2010 part of the two-year cycle, including gala performances of Mahler's Symphony No.8 (18 & 20 Feb); the first time in nearly 20 years the "Symphony of a Thousand" will be heard in the Sydney Opera House Concert Hall.

Beginning in 2006, the Sydney Symphony Live label is the only recording label wholly owned by an Australian orchestra. To date, eight CDs have been released on the label including the 2009 release of rare Rachmaninoff chamber works with Vladimir Ashkenazy on piano accompanying Sydney Symphony concertmaster Dene Olding.

For more information, contact:

Yvonne Zammit
PR Manager, Sydney Symphony
Tel: 8215 4612 / 0410 761 578
Email: yvonne.zammit@sydneysymphony.com

2010 Sydney Symphony Mahler cycle concert dates

February 10, 11, 12 & 13

MAHLER: Blumine

MAHLER: Songs of a Wayfarer (Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen)

MAHLER: Symphony No. 1

with

Markus Eiche, baritone

February 18 & 20

MAHLER: Symphony No. 8

with

Annalena Persson, Marina Shaguch, Sara Macliver, sopranos

Dagmar Peckova and Bernadette Cullen, mezzo-sopranos

Simon O'Neill, tenor

Markus Eiche, baritone

Martin Snell, bass

WASO Chorus; Adelaide Symphony Chorus; Sydney Philharmonia Choirs; Sydney Children's Choir

May 20, 21 & 22

MAHLER: Symphony No. 5

May 26, 28 & 29

MAHLER: Das Lied von der Erde

with

Lilli Paasikivi, mezzo-soprano

Stuart Skelton, tenor

November 24, 26 & 27

MAHLER: Symphony No. 4

with

Emma Matthews, soprano

December 2, 3 & 4

MAHLER: Symphony No. 3

with

Lilli Paasikivi, mezzo-soprano

Sydney Philharmonia Choirs and Sydney Children's Choir

2011 Sydney Symphony Mahler cycle concert dates

March 3, 4 & 5

MAHLER: Symphony No. 6

March 9, 11 & 12

MAHLER: Symphony No. 7

May 12, 13 & 14

MAHLER: Symphony No. 10 (completed by Clinton A. Carpenter)

May 18, 20 & 21

MAHLER: Symphony No. 9 (Performed on the 100th anniversary of Mahler's death on 18th May)

November 23, 25 & 26

MAHLER: Symphony No. 2

with

TBA, soprano

Lilli Paasikivi, mezzo-soprano

Sydney Philharmonia Choirs

All Mahler cycle performances are conducted by Vladimir Ashkenazy and take place in the Sydney Opera House concert hall.