

MEDIA OFFICE

MEDIA RELEASE



sydney.edu.au After hours: 0434 609 790

28 May, 2010

Honorary doctorate for musical legend

The University of Sydney has today awarded an honorary doctorate to the Principal Conductor and Artistic Advisor of the Sydney Symphony, Vladimir Ashkenazy.

The Honorary Doctor of Music was conferred in a ceremony in the University's Great Hall by Chancellor and NSW Governor Marie Bashir AC CVO, after a citation read by Vice-Chancellor, Dr Michael Spence.

In his citation, Dr Spence described Mr Ashkenazy as a giant in the world of music.

"Both as a pianist and conductor, he has thrilled audiences throughout the world for more than 40 years and has been a prolific recording artist including receiving six Grammy awards," Dr Spence said.

"His other awards and recognitions are numerous. Beyond that, he is an outstanding human being who has contributed immensely to the underprivileged and humanity in general, well beyond his contribution as a musician."

At the age of 18 in 1956, Vladimir Ashkenazy won first prize at the Queen Elisabeth Competition in Brussels and after graduating from the Moscow Conservatory shared first prize in the second International Tchaikovsky Competition in 1962. In 1963 he made his London debut and in 1969 began conducting.

In this year, he made his first visit to Australia, touring for the ABC where he appeared as concerto soloist and recitalist in Sydney as well as six other cities. In Sydney alone, he performed four different concertos in six concerts over a period of nine days, as well as two different piano recital programs earlier in the tour.

In 1977, Ashkenazy made his first conducting appearance in Australia as soloist and director of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra. He was featured artist at the 1984 Adelaide Festival as soloist-conductor with London's Philharmonia Orchestra.

Ashkenazy was the principal conductor of the Royal Philharmonic from 1987 to 1994; Chief Conductor of the Czech Philharmonic from 1998 to 2003; and became Music Director of the NHK Symphony Orchestra in Tokyo in 2004. He is also Conductor Laureate of the Philharmonia Orchestra.

He holds the positions of Music Director of the European Union Youth Orchestra and Conductor Laureate of the Iceland Symphony Orchestra and maintains strong links with a number of other major orchestras, including the Cleveland Orchestra (of whom he is former Principal Guest Conductor), San Francisco Symphony and Deutsches Sinfonie-Orchester Berlin.

Media contacts: Rachel Gleeson, University of Sydney Media Officer on 0403 067 342, (02) 9351 4312 or rachel.gleeson@sydney.edu.au

Katherine Stevenson, Sydney Symphony Publicist on 0488 400 102, (02) 8215 4653 or katherine.stevenson@sydneyesymphony.com