

THURSDAY 15 JULY

Statement from Sydney Symphony Managing Director Rory Jeffes on the death of Sir Charles Mackerras CH AC CBE

Australia has lost a living treasure with the death overnight of conductor Sir Charles Mackerras.

The Sydney Symphony had a long relationship with Sir Charles. The link goes back to his earliest engagements as a casual oboist with the Sydney Symphony during World War II and then his appointment in 1946 as the Orchestra's Principal Oboe.

A pivotal event was the opening concert in the new Sydney Opera House in 1973 in which he conducted the Sydney Symphony with soloist Birgit Nilsson.

Then, in 1982, Sir Charles became the first Australian to take up the role of Sydney Symphony Chief Conductor, a position he held until 1985.

Most recently, the Sydney Symphony welcomed home Sir Charles to conduct the Orchestra in 2007 as part of its 75th anniversary celebrations.

The relationship has continued over recent years – indeed we were looking forward to welcoming Sir Charles to our BBC Proms performance in London on August 24 as our very special guest.

The connection between Sir Charles and the Sydney Symphony has run deep for over 60 years. He was a man of great musical scholarship, talent and energy. We are all deeply saddened to have lost such an eminent conductor and a special part of the Sydney Symphony family.

Our thoughts are with Sir Charles' loved ones at this time.