

MEDIA RELEASE

HEAR WHY EVERYONE'S RAVING ABOUT HIM

Vladimir Ashkenazy conducts the Sydney Symphony Rachmaninov Festival this November

Sydney, 17 October 2007 -- Sydney Symphony Principal Conductor and Artistic Advisor from 2009 – 2011, Vladimir Ashkenazy, returns to Sydney after last year's sell-out concerts to conduct the Sydney Symphony's third composer festival of 2007, the Rachmaninov Festival.

For just over two weeks in November, audiences will hear why Maestro Ashkenazy is considered one of the world's foremost interpreters of Rachmaninov's music and why critics have described his Rachmaninov performances as "magnificent and fiery" (The Australian, 2006).

Over nine performances, the Sydney Symphony and Maestro Ashkenazy will take audiences on a journey through Rachmaninov's major orchestral works including his three symphonies and three of his piano concertos with a performance by American pianist Garrick Ohlsson of the Piano Concerto No.3, made famous in the movie 'Shine'



Maestro Ashkenazy has been associated with Rachmaninov's music all his life, from his early years in Moscow to his intuitive performances and recordings as a conductor and pianist.

He once commented in an interview for andante.com: "Any time is a good time to revisit Rachmaninov. He was a great composer with tremendous inventiveness and substantial validity. The idea of a festival is to celebrate the great achievement of a great composer, and to give him his due."

"My passion for Rachmaninov started as long ago as I can remember. Somewhere deep inside me there is a certain subliminal feeling that Rachmaninov's music is a nutshell of the most elemental characteristics of the Russian soul. His music takes me by the throat and heart," said Ashkenazy.

Audiences too will be moved when Rachmaninov's music, some of the most opulent, virtuosic and unabashedly romantic music ever penned, sounds out across the concert hall stage.

Rachmaninov's life would be the perfect subject for a glamorous black and white movie. Born during the last flowering of Imperial Russia but ending his days as a celebrity in Beverley Hills, Rachmaninov was the greatest pianist of his age and a composer of genius.

Overcoming strife, both personal and political, Rachmaninov became one of the most famous musicians of the 20th century. Now, the charisma he had on the concert stage lives on in his stunning symphonies and concertos with their soaring lyrical melodies and evocative colours.

Performing alongside the Orchestra will be four outstanding guest pianists, each hand-picked by Maestro Ashkenazy for their technical and expressive expertise: Cristina Ortiz, Kazune Shimizu, Lukáš Vondráček and Garrick Ohlsson.

For Shimizu, Vondráček and Ohlsson, these Rachmaninov performances will mark their debuts with the Sydney Symphony while Cristina Ortiz returns to the Opera House concert hall stage after an absence of 15 years.

The Sydney Symphony Rachmaninov Festival is being recorded by Octavia Records for future release.

ENDS

For further information, images and interview requests, please contact:

Yvonne Zammit, PR Manager
Sydney Symphony

Tel. + 61 2 8215 4612 / 0410 761 578

yvonne.zammit@sydneyssymphony.com

Stuart Fyfe, Publicist

Sydney Symphony

Tel: +61 2 8215 4653 / 0404 092 377

stuart.fyfe@sydneyssymphony.com

NOTES TO EDITORS

The Rachmaninov Festival program with conductor, Vladimir Ashkenazy:

RACHMANINOV PIANO CONCERTO 2	RACHMANINOV PIANO CONCERTO 4	RACHMANINOV RHAPSODY	RACHMANINOV PIANO CONCERTO 3
Fri 2 Nov, 8pm Sat 3 Nov, 2pm	Wed 7 Nov, 8pm Friday 9 Nov, 11am* Sat 10 Nov, 8pm	Mon 12 Nov, 7pm Thu 15 Nov, 1.30pm	Fri 16 Nov, 8pm Sat 17 Nov, 8pm
Cristina Ortiz piano	Kazune Shimizu piano	Lukáš Vondráček piano	Garrick Ohlsson piano
RACHMANINOV Capriccio on Gypsy Themes, Op.12	RACHMANINOV The Rock	RACHMANINOV Isle of the Dead	RACHMANINOV Vocalise
Piano Concerto No.2	Piano Concerto No.4	Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini	Symphonic Dances
Symphony No.1	Symphony No.2	Symphony No.3	Piano Concerto No.3
Tickets from \$60	Tickets from \$45	Tickets from \$60	Tickets from \$63

*Symphony No.2 only

A pre-concert talk will take place in the Northern Foyer of the Sydney Opera House 45 minutes before each performance.

For more information on the Rachmaninov Festival piano soloists, visit:

Cristina Ortiz: www.cristina.ortiz.name

Kazune Shimizu: www.japansclassic.com/artists/japanarts_16/kazune_shimizu.html

Lukáš Vondráček: www.lukasvondracek.co.uk/

Garrick Ohlsson: <http://www.opus3artists.com/profiles/60193.html>

Sydney Symphony concert programs are now available online before a performance, just visit www.sydneyssymphony.com and click on calendar date for the concert program you'd like to see.