

MEDIA RELEASE

**A WORLD PREMIERE AND SOME SPECIAL GUESTS FOR THE SYDNEY SYMPHONY'S
75th BIRTHDAY**

Near To Heaven at the Sydney Opera House, 1–4 August.



Sydney, Tues 23 July: Special guest artists cellist Pieter Wispelwey and conductor Jeffrey Tate join the Sydney Symphony to take audiences 'near to heaven' in a concert that includes the world premiere of a work written especially to celebrate the Orchestra's 75th birthday year.

Andrew Ford's new work *Headlong* features alongside Elgar's First Symphony and Walton's Cello Concerto, in a concert sure to hold music lovers captive. Hailed as the greatest symphony of modern times, Elgar's First Symphony is as stirring and lyrical as his most famous works. Elgar's friend Jaeger (Enigma's 'Nimrod') wrote that the First Symphony takes us 'near to heaven'. British conductor Jeffrey Tate is a noted interpreter of Elgar's rich, emotive music. Walton's outlook was breezier, more Mediterranean than British, and his Cello Concerto captures the play of light on blue waters and warmth of the Italian soul as well as the soulful melancholy of the cello's voice – a perfect showcase for renowned soloist Pieter Wispelwey, whose playing combines 'passion and lightness of touch'.

Throughout 2007 the Sydney Symphony celebrates with a number of special artistic projects. An absolute highlight is the world premiere of *Headlong*, commissioned from Australian composer, writer and radio broadcaster, Andrew Ford. It reflects a special relationship between composer and orchestra, that has spanned many years, and a multitude of projects in which Ford has played various roles – as interviewer, stage presenter and composer. With a special capacity to communicate both through and about music, Ford is an important part of the Australian music landscape, and the Sydney Symphony community.

Headlong is conducted by Jeffrey Tate who originally studied medicine at the University of Cambridge and qualified as a doctor at St Thomas' Hospital in London. However, music had always been a great passion and in 1970 he joined the music staff at Covent Garden. In 1976 he assisted Boulez at Bayreuth in the centenary *Ring* cycle, and also worked with Karajan in Salzburg. After his debut with *Carmen* at the Göteborg Opera, he rapidly rose to prominence. Jeffrey Tate conducts regularly in the world's leading opera houses and festivals. In 2001 he was awarded with the Franco Abbiati prize for his work with Orchestra Sinfonica Nazionale della RAI and named Direttore Onorario; and for his production of *Die Königskinder* by Humperdinck at Teatro San Carlo in Naples with the Franco Abbiati 2002 prize of the Italian music critics. Jeffrey Tate has been named Chevalier of the Légion d'Honneur, Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres as well as a Commander of the British Empire.

Jeffrey Tate is joined on stage by much-loved Dutch cellist Pieter Wispelwey who bears such strong bonds with Australia that he's almost a local! He first appeared in Australia in 1992 as part of the Melbourne Festival, followed in rapid succession by concerts with Melbourne, Adelaide and West Australian Symphony Orchestras, a performance in the Sydney Symphony's Great Cellists Play Bach series and a live concert broadcast for the ABC, during 1995. He is a regular guest of the ACO, appearing in national tours and at several Huntington Festivals, and most recently touring with the orchestra to North America in 2006.

Pieter Wispelwey is among the first of a generation of performers who are equally at ease on modern and period cello. His acute stylistic awareness, combined with a truly original interpretation and a phenomenal technical mastery, has won the hearts of critics and public alike in repertoire ranging from JS Bach to Elliott Carter.

Born in Haarlem, Netherlands, Wispelwey's sophisticated musical personality is rooted in the training he received: from early years with Dicky Boeke and Anner Bylsma in Amsterdam to Paul Katz in the USA and William Pleeth in Great Britain. In 1992 he became the first cellist ever to receive the Netherlands Music Prize, which is awarded to the most promising young musician in the Netherlands.

Wispelwey's career spans five continents and he has appeared as soloist with many of the world's leading orchestras, including Los Angeles Philharmonic, St Paul's Chamber Orchestra, Rotterdam Philharmonic, Hallé Orchestra, BBC Symphony Orchestra, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, London Philharmonic. He also gives regular recital appearances in London (Wigmore Hall), Paris (Châtelet), Amsterdam's Concertgebouw, Berlin (Konzerthaus), Milan (Societta del Quartetto), Buenos Aires (Teatro Colon), Los Angeles (Walt Disney Hall) and New York (Lincoln Center). Wispelwey is establishing a reputation as one of the most charismatic recitalists on the circuit. Recent recital highlights include New York's Lincoln Centre, Amsterdam Concertgebouw's Robeco Series, extensive recital tour of Japan and appearances at the Edinburgh, Schleswig-Holstein, Stresa, and Lanaudiere Festivals.

Pieter Wispelwey's discography, available on Channel Classics, displays an impressive line up of over twenty recordings, six of which attracted major international awards. He plays on a 1760 cello by Giovanni Battista Guadagnini.

Jeffrey Tate and Pieter Wispelwey appear with the Sydney Symphony for *Near to Heaven* from Wed 1 to Sat 4 Aug at the Sydney Opera House. Tickets from \$49. To book call Sydney Symphony on 8215 4600 or visit www.sydneyphilharmonicsymphony.com

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For further information regarding *Near to Heaven*, interviews with Jeffrey Tate and Pieter Wispelwey or Sydney Symphony musicians, and photo opportunities, please contact:

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Note to editors Sydney Symphony concert programs are now distributed free of charge to audiences. They are also available online for download before the concert.

Concert details

CONCERT

8pm, Wed 1 Aug

1.30pm, Thurs 2 Aug

8pm, Fri 3 Aug

8pm, Sat 4 Aug

Concert Hall, Sydney Opera House

PROGRAM

Near To Heaven

FORD Headlong (World Premiere)

WALTON Cello Concerto

ELGAR Symphony No. 1

Free pre-concert talk by Natalie Shea at 7.15pm in the Northern Foyer (12.45pm on 2 August).