



MEDIA RELEASE

Vladimir Ashkenazy conducts the Sydney Symphony Elgar Festival

“People yearn for things that can stir them”

— Edward Elgar, 1904

From January 2009 Vladimir Ashkenazy takes up the reins of the Sydney Symphony as Principal Conductor and Artistic Advisor. Before that time however, he will return to Sydney in late October to conduct the Orchestra’s Elgar Festival.

Over three weeks, the Sydney Symphony and Ashkenazy will take audiences on a journey through Elgar’s major orchestral works from his two symphonies and the violin and cello concertos, to his much loved *Enigma Variations* and *Pomp and Circumstance* marches.

Mr Ashkenazy recently commented in an article in *The Australian*: “Elgar’s music touches me very deeply, and I hope that I can do a good job with his symphonies. In Britain, he is revered very much, and rightly so. Other parts of the world treat him with condescension, except for the *Enigma Variations* and the Cello Concerto; these are regarded as great pieces of the repertoire. But the rest, people look at with a little less approval. It’s a pity, because I think the music is trying to express some of the very important categories in our lives.”

Elgar’s music is best summed up by the composer’s own favourite musical expression: *nobilmente*, meaning nobly or majestically. When composing, he drew musical inspiration from the cultural landscape of Britain at the turn of the twentieth century, lending a distinctive Englishness to his music. His creativity and strength of vision saw him placed highly among the Romantic composers of his day, with his music bearing a trademark sense of reflection, worldly passion and melancholy that swells from quiet lyricism to overpowering grandeur. For Sydney audiences, the festival is an opportunity to rediscover the expansive and emotional qualities of this fine composer’s work.

In the festival’s opening concert, the Sydney Symphony and Mr Ashkenazy will be joined by cellist Jian Wang in a performance of Elgar’s poetic Cello Concerto. Wang first came to the world’s attention when he

appeared in the 1981 Academy Award–winning film *From Mao to Mozart* as a 10-year-old pupil playing for the distinguished violinist, Issac Stern.

Other outstanding soloists performing alongside the Orchestra are Finnish mezzo-soprano Lilli Paasikivi and acclaimed violinist, James Ehnes. The festival concludes with an international cast of singers joining the Sydney Symphony and Ashkenazy in Elgar’s epic choral work, *The Dream of Gerontius*.

Ashkenazy’s Elgar Festival is being recorded by Octavia Records for future release and is sponsored by Macquarie Group. Tickets can be purchased by phoning the Sydney Symphony Box Office on 02 8215 4600 or visiting www.sydneyphilharmonicsymphony.com.

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NOTES TO EDITORS

Ashkenazy’s Elgar Festival:

ELGAR’S CELLO CONCERTO	THE SPIRIT OF DELIGHT: ELGAR 2	ELGAR’S ENIGMAS	THE DREAM OF GERONTIUS
Fri 31 Oct, 8pm Mon 3 Nov, 7pm	Fri 7 Nov, 8pm Sat 8 Nov, 8pm	Wed 12 Nov, 8pm Thu 13 Nov, 1.30pm Fri 14 Nov, 11am*	Wed 19 Nov, 9pm Thu 20 Nov, 8pm
Cello Concerto Symphony No.1	Sea Pictures, Serenade for Strings Symphony No.2	Violin Concerto Enigma Variations Pomp & Circumstance Marches 1 & 2	The Dream of Gerontius
Jian Wang, cello	Lilli Paasikivi, mezzo-soprano	James Ehnes, violin	Mark Tucker, tenor (Gerontius) Lilli Paasikivi, mezzo-soprano (Angel) David Wilson-Johnson, bass baritone (Priest/Angel of the Agony) Sydney Philharmonia Choirs
Tickets from \$35	Tickets from \$35	Tickets from \$35	Tickets from \$35

**In the South* replaces
the Violin Concerto

A pre-concert talk will take place in the Northern Foyer of the Sydney Opera House 45 minutes before each performance (except for Fri 14 Nov, 11am).

Sydney Symphony concert programs are now available online before a performance, just visit www.sydneyphilharmonicsymphony.com.