

For Immediate Release
MEDIA RELEASE

May 31, 2011

A Mahler focus for the finale of the VSO's 2010/2011 Season

Vancouver, BC - Maestro Bramwell Tovey and the **VSO** present two remarkable works by **Gustav Mahler** in the final two classical presentations of the 2010/2011 season, beginning with *Das Lied von der Erde* (Songs of the Earth) on **Saturday and Monday, June 4th and 6th**, and his *Symphony No. 1, Titan* on the VSO's Season Finale weekend of **Saturday and Monday, June 11th and 13th**, all **8pm** at the **Orpheum Theatre**.

June begins with **Mahler's** *Das Lied von der Erde* (Songs of the Earth), a song-cycle on a symphonic scale that venerates the sacredness of nature. Written after his eldest daughter's untimely death and his own diagnosis of a serious and progressive heart condition, the symphony is an uplifting ode to life. The influence of time – night and day, the changing of the seasons – is strongly felt throughout the piece which was inspired by *The Chinese Flute*, Hans Bethge's German paraphrases of Chinese poems that date back to the eighth century. The piece features mezzo-soprano **Allyson McHardy** and tenor **John Mac Master**.

The blockbuster season finale concert features **Mahler's** *Symphony No. 1 'Titan.'* Better known in the early stages of his career as a conductor rather than as a composer, Mahler's extraordinary symphonies and songs are justifiably what Mahler is known for today.

The first version of his *Symphony No. 1, 'Titan'* was completed in 1888, and debuted in Budapest in 1889 – to a not too terribly friendly reception. The work was originally intended as a symphonic poem without title that takes the early Romantic writer Jean Paul as a literary source. The title of "Titan" that was added years after the composition and after the orchestration was fleshed out and certain revisions made, comes from the eponymous novel by Jean Paul, in which two intellectual titans vie with one another for their separate objectives of intellectual freedom and pleasure. The music itself draws from Mahler's own *Songs of a Wayfarer*, composed a couple of years before the symphony, utilizing these themes in the first and second movements. The second movement also contains, in the bass section, a solo that quotes the children's song *Frere Jacques* (or *Bruder Martin*, as it was known in Vienna) before the next quotation from the *Wayfarer* songs provides an interlude to the finale. And what a finale. The dramatic intensity of the final section of music in this symphony has rarely been matched (in fact, during the debut performance in Budapest, a woman jumped out of her seat in alarm as the movement began, an incident that Mahler found to be quite amusing!). A powerful march gives way to a tuneful and

restrained melody before the storm reappears, driving the piece to its stunning conclusion, in which, after a brief quote of the *Hallelujah Chorus* from Handel's *Messiah*, the forces of happiness win the day and over the dark storms that threatened to overwhelm the music. Mahler's resounding first symphonic statement was complete.

Also starring in the finale is the VSO's GRAMMY and JUNO partner, Canadian violinist **James Ehnes** performing **Tchaikovsky's** exciting *Violin Concerto*. Considered one of the most dynamic and exciting performers in classical music, Ehnes has performed in over 30 countries on five continents, appearing regularly with many of the world's most well-known orchestras and conductors. James will add to his extensive discography of over 25 recordings with the Fall release of two new recordings: a disc of Bartok's two *Violin Concertos* and the *Viola Concerto* with the BBC Philharmonic and Gianandrea Noseda (Chandos) and Tchaikovsky's *Violin Concerto* with the Sydney Symphony and Vladimir Ashkenazy (Onyx).

CONCERT INFO

PricewaterhouseCoopers Masterworks Silver

SATURDAY & MONDAY, JUNE 4 & 6, 8 PM, ORPHEUM THEATRE

Bramwell Tovey *conductor*

John Mac Master *Tenor*

Allyson McHardy *mezzo-soprano*

BRITTEN	Peter Grimes: Four Sea Interludes
LIADOV	The Enchanted Lake
MAHLER	Das Lied von der Erde

TICKET INFORMATION:

Tickets: \$26.75 - \$84 (senior, student and subscriber discounts available)

Tickets available online at www.vancouversymphony.ca or by calling VSO customer service at 604.876.3434

Series Sponsor: PwC

Video Screen Sponsor: TELUS

Masterworks Diamond

SATURDAY & MONDAY, JUNE 11 & 13, 8 PM, ORPHEUM THEATRE

Bramwell Tovey *conductor*

James Ehnes *violin*

GOOD	Fanfare (World Premiere)
TCHAIKOVSKY	Violin Concerto
MAHLER	Symphony No. 1, <i>Titan</i>

TICKET INFORMATION:

Tickets: \$26.75 - \$84 (senior, student and subscriber discounts available)

Tickets available online at www.vancouversymphony.ca or by calling VSO customer service at 604.876.3434

June 11th Concert Sponsor: Keir Surgical

BIOGRAPHIES

Bramwell Tovey *conductor*

A musician of striking versatility, Bramwell Tovey is acknowledged around the world for his artistic depth and warm, charismatic personality on the podium. Tovey's career as a conductor is uniquely enhanced by his work as a composer and pianist, lending him a remarkable musical perspective. He has been Music Director of the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra since September 2000.

Tovey garnered a 2008 Grammy Award and a 2008 Juno Award for his recording with violinist James Ehnes and the Vancouver Symphony. Recently named Principal Guest Conductor for the Los Angeles Philharmonic at the Hollywood Bowl, he works frequently with the Toronto Symphony, Montreal Symphony, Royal Philharmonic and the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestras, among many others. He has presided as host and conductor of the New York Philharmonic's Summertime Classics series at Avery Fisher Hall since its founding in 2004.

As a composer, he was honoured with the Best Canadian Classical Composition Juno Award in 2003 for his *Requiem for a Charred Skull*. New works include a co-commission for the New York and Los Angeles Philharmonics' 2008 summer seasons as well as a full-length opera for the Calgary Opera, *The Inventor*, recently premiered in January of 2011.

Tovey has been awarded honorary degrees, including a Fellowship from the Royal Academy of Music in London, honorary Doctorates of Law from the universities of Winnipeg and Manitoba, and Kwantlen University College, as well as a Royal Conservatory of Music Fellowship in Toronto. In 1999, he received the M. Joan Chalmers National Award for Artistic Direction, a Canadian prize awarded to artists for outstanding contributions in the performing arts.

Allyson McHardy *Mezzo-soprano*

Mezzo-soprano Allyson McHardy, is "a singer of enormous imagination and versatility, sang a lustrous and energetic Rosina (Il barbiere di Siviglia)" according to the San Francisco Chronicle's Joshua Kosman.

Highlights of Ms. McHardy's 2010-2011 season include a return to the Grant Park Festival in Chicago for Mahler's SYMPHONY NO. 2, the lead role in Rossini's CENERENTOLA at Glyndebourne, Annio in L'Opéra Nationale de Paris's CLEMENZA DI TITO, Mahler's DAS LIED VON DER ERDE with Tovey and the Vancouver Symphony, Isabella in L'ITALIANA IN ALGERI in Limoges and Aix en Provence, Flosshilde in DAS RHEINGOLD with Nagano and the Montreal Symphony, Mozart's REQUIEM with the Seattle Symphony and Houston's Mercury Baroque Orchestra, LA DAMNATION DE FAUST with the Vancouver Bach Choir and MESSIAH with the Grand Philharmonic Choir of Kitchener Waterloo, Ontario.

Ms. McHardy began her 2009-2010 season as Suzuki in MADAMA BUTTERFLY for the Canadian Opera Company and was also seen as Jo in LITTLE WOMEN for Calgary Opera. As a concert artist she sang MESSIAHS in Madrid with Lopez-Cobos, Vancouver and with the Iseler Singers of Toronto.

John Mac Master *tenor*

Since his astonishing portrayal of Canio in Pagliacci at Glimmerglass Opera, John Mac Master has been in demand at the highest international level for the dramatic tenor repertoire. Recent performances and recording projects include Florestan in Fidelio with Sir Colin Davis in London, Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 with Sir Bernard Haitink (both with the London Symphony Orchestra), Calaf in Turandot for Dresden and Euryanthe in Warsaw for the Beethoven Festival. His Metropolitan Opera debut came as Canio in Pagliacci including the Saturday Afternoon 'Live from the Met' broadcast.

In 2010-2011, engagements included Glagolitic Mass in Atlanta and at Carnegie Hall with Robert Spano and in Toronto with Peter Oundjian. He starred in Pagliacci and Cavalleria Rusticana for the Kentucky Opera, as Herodes in Salome for L'Opéra de Montréal and in Emperor of Atlantis for Boston Lyric Opera. Further credits include Florestan in Fidelio with Gergiev, Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 with the Dallas Symphony, Tristan und Isolde in concert with Daniel Harding in Europe, Mahler's Symphony No 8 in Vancouver with Tovey and in Ottawa and Montreal with Nezet-Seguin and Dream of Gerontius for Chicago's Grant Park Festival.

James Ehnes *violin*

Hailed as "the Jascha Heifetz of our day" (Globe and Mail), violinist James Ehnes is widely considered one of the most dynamic and exciting performers in classical music. He has performed in over 30 countries on five continents, appearing regularly with many of the world's most well-known orchestras and conductors.

In the 2009-2010 season James Ehnes performed in Japan, Germany, the Netherlands, the UK, Canada and the United States. In Europe, James was featured in concerts with the BBC Philharmonic, Bournemouth Symphony, Philharmonia Orchestra, BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, Netherlands Philharmonic, and the Deutsches Symphonie Orchester Berlin. In North America, he performed with the Baltimore, St. Louis, Atlanta, Philadelphia, Seattle, Columbus, Houston, Dallas, San Francisco, Toronto, Montreal, Victoria, Manitoba Chamber, and National Arts Centre orchestras. In addition to his many orchestral engagements, James appeared in recital in Detroit, Aspen, Toronto, Vancouver, Brandon, Montreal, and Glasgow, and gave the New York premiere of Aaron Jay Kernis's Two Movements with Bells at the famed Le Poisson Rouge in a concert celebrating the composer's 50th birthday. He also performed for the 16th consecutive year with the Seattle Chamber Music Society, where he is the Associate Artistic Director. The 2010-2011 season features tours to Australia, New Zealand, and Malaysia in addition to performances throughout Canada, the US, and Europe in repertoire ranging from Bartok and Kernis to Vivaldi and Bach.

Ehnes's extensive discography of over 20 recordings has been honoured with numerous international awards and prizes, including a GRAMMY, a GRAMOPHONE, and 6 JUNO Awards. His latest addition is a new recording of the repertoire that launched his recording career, Paganini's 24 Caprices (Onyx), released in October 2009, about which the Times writes "[Ehnes's] artistry suggests that in Paganini's

age he would have enjoyed similar stature to the great man.” James’s first recorded the Paganini Caprices in 1995 for Telarc. His JUNO Award-winning release of HOMAGE (Onyx), a CD/DVD set featuring performances on 12 of the greatest violins and violas ever made, all belonging to the extraordinary Fulton Collection continues to garner exceptional reviews.

Other recent releases include Elgar’s Violin Concerto with the Philharmonia Orchestra conducted by Sir Andrew Davis (Onyx) and a disc of works by Paul Schoenfield with pianist Andrew Russo (Black Box). James’s CD featuring the violin concertos of Korngold, Walton and Barber with the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra, Bramwell Tovey conducting (CBC Records) was widely considered a highlight of 2006 and won the 2008 GRAMMY and JUNO Awards.

In January 2006, he celebrated the 250th anniversary of Mozart's birth with the release of a recording of Mozart's complete oeuvre for solo violin and orchestra. The five Violin Concertos and three single movement works— Adagio K 261, Rondo K 269, and Rondo K 373 – features an ensemble of extraordinary musicians which Ehnes gathered from around the world and directed himself (CBC Records) and has widely received top praise making it “a clear first choice in the field” (Classic FM). James Ehnes has recorded repertoire ranging from Bach Violin Sonatas to John Adams Road Movies. His CBC recordings with l’Orchestre symphonique de Montréal of Max Bruch’s Concertos nos. 1 and 3 (with Charles Dutoit) and Concerto no. 2 with the Scottish Fantasy (with Mario Bernardi) won back-to-back Juno awards in 2001 and 2002 for Best Classical Recording. In January 2002, he was named Young Artist of the Year at the Cannes Classical Awards for his Six Sonatas & Partitas for Solo Violin by Bach (Analekta), which was also awarded a JUNO award in 2001.

James Ehnes was born in 1976 in Brandon, Manitoba, Canada. He began violin studies at the age of four, at age nine he became a protégé of the noted Canadian violinist Francis Chaplin. He studied with Sally Thomas at the Meadowmount School of Music and from 1993 to 1997 at The Juilliard School, winning the Peter Mennin Prize for Outstanding Achievement and Leadership in Music upon his graduation. Mr. Ehnes first gained national recognition in 1987 as winner of the Grand Prize in Strings at the Canadian Music Competition. The following year he won the First Prize in Strings at the Canadian Music Festival, the youngest musician ever to do so. At age 13, he made his orchestral solo debut with the Orchestre symphonique de Montréal. He has won numerous awards and prizes, including the first ever Ivan Galamian Memorial Award, the Canada Council for the Arts’ prestigious Virginia Parker Prize, and a 2005 Avery Fisher Career Grant. In October 2005, James was honoured by Brandon University with a Doctor of Music degree (honoris causa) and in July 2007 he became the youngest person ever elected as a Fellow to the Royal Society of Canada. In July 2010 he received the honor of being named a Member of the Order of Canada.

James Ehnes plays the "Marsick" Stradivarius of 1715 and gratefully acknowledges its extended loan from the Fulton Collection. He currently lives in Bradenton, Florida with his wife Kate.

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