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**MEDIA RELEASE**

April 26, 2011

## **Italian Pianist Alessio Bax in his VSO Debut with Conductor Laureate Kazuyoshi Akiyama**

**Vancouver, BC - VSO Conductor Laureate Kazuyoshi Akiyama** will conduct extraordinary Italian pianist **Alessio Bax** in his **VSO** debut on **Saturday and Monday, May 7<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>, 8pm** at the **Orpheum Theatre**.

An **Avery Fisher Career Grant** winner and a gifted interpreter of Classical piano works, Alessio Bax has appeared with over 80 orchestras around the world and at numerous festivals and recitals. He has been praised for creating "a ravishing listening experience" with his lyrical playing, insightful interpretations and dazzling facility.

**Kazuyoshi Akiyama** was recently named Conductor Laureate of the Tokyo Symphony Orchestra after serving as Music Director for nearly 40 years. He is also music Director of the Hiroshima Symphony Orchestra, and Principal Conductor and Music Advisor of the Kyushu Symphony Orchestra, and Conductor Laureate of the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra.

For his VSO debut, Alessio Bax will perform **Mozart's** final piano concerto, *Piano Concerto No. 27*. Its restraint is evident from the very opening measures. The first movement goes on to balance brilliance and humour with mellowness. Throughout, Mozart allows us glimpses of the heartbreak lurking behind the music's veneer of gracefulness. A gentle slow movement follows, angelic in its tenderness and artless simplicity. The solo piano launches the finale, a rondo.

This concert also features **Nielsen's** *Symphony No. 4, The Inextinguishable*, composed in 1914 during the First World War. He composed the symphony to celebrate the positive aspects of life, including what he believed would be their inevitable victory over the powers of darkness and despair. He set down his intentions in a note he attached to the score: "The composer has tried to indicate with a single word that which only the music itself has the power to express fully: the elementary will to live. Music is life, and like life, inextinguishable."

### **CONCERT INFO**

**Goldcorp Masterworks Gold**  
**SATURDAY & MONDAY, MAY 7 & 9, 8 PM, ORPHEUM THEATRE**  
**Kazuyoshi Akiyama** *conductor*

**Alessio Bax** *piano*

<b>TAKEMITSU</b>	Rain coming
<b>MOZART</b>	Piano Concerto No. 27
<b>NIELSEN</b>	Symphony No. 4, <i>The Inextinguishable</i>

#### **TICKET INFORMATION**

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

**Tickets available online at [www.vancouversymphony.ca](http://www.vancouversymphony.ca) or by calling VSO customer service at 604.876.3434**

**Series Sponsor:** Goldcorp Inc.

#### **BIOGRAPHIES**

**Kazuyoshi Akiyama** *conductor*

Kazuyoshi Akiyama was recently named Conductor Laureate of the Tokyo Symphony Orchestra after serving as Music Director for nearly 40 years. He is also music Director of the Hiroshima Symphony Orchestra, and Principal Conductor and Music Advisor of the Kyushu Symphony Orchestra.

Mr. Akiyama began studying piano at age three under the tutelage of his mother, a highly regarded instructor in Tokyo. He entered the piano department of Toho Gakuen School of Music, and was so strongly influenced by the conducting activities of fellow student Seiji Ozawa that he transferred to the conducting department and studied with Hideo Saito. In 1974, a year after graduating, Mr. Akiyama made his debut with The Tokyo Symphony. He was named Music Director and Permanent Conductor of that orchestra two months later.

Outside of Japan, Mr. Akiyama's conducting successes began with U.S. and European tours of the Toho Gakuen School of Music Orchestra. He went on to guest conduct the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, American Symphony Orchestra, Rochester Philharmonic and Vancouver Symphony Orchestra, and gained recognition in guest engagements with the San Francisco Symphony, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Philadelphia Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, The Cleveland Orchestra and Boston Symphony Orchestra. In Europe, he has conducted major orchestras including the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Cologne Radio Orchestra, and Bayerischer Rundfunk Orchestra.

Mr. Akiyama has served as Assistant Conductor of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra (1968-1969), Music Director of the American Symphony Orchestra, following Leopold Stokowski, in New York, (1973-1978), and Music Director of the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra (1972-1985). He was granted the title of Conductor Laureate of the Vancouver symphony upon leaving his post there in 1985. During 2004-2005 he served as Principal Guest Conductor of the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra. From 1985 to 1993, Mr. Akiyama served as Music Director of the Syracuse Symphony Orchestra.

In 1991, Kazuyoshi Akiyama led The Tokyo Symphony in a world tour to celebrate the orchestra's 45th anniversary, which included performances in New York at the United Nations, as well as in London under the auspices of the United Kingdom's Japan Festival. He commemorated the Tokyo Symphony's 400th subscription performance with the Japanese premiere of Schoenberg's *Moses und Aaron*.

Mr. Akiyama was awarded an honorary doctorate in Music from Colgate University in 1992. He is the recipient of numerous citations, including the Suntory Music Award, the Kyoto Music Award, the Mainichi Arts Award, and the Arts Encouragement Prize of the Minister of Education. In 2001, he was awarded the Emperor's Purple Ribbon Medal from the Japanese Government for his outstanding contribution to the country's musical culture.

### **Alessio Bax** *piano*

Pianist Alessio Bax is praised for creating "a ravishing listening experience" with his lyrical playing, insightful interpretations and dazzling facility. "His playing quivers with an almost hypnotic intensity," says *Gramophone* magazine, leading to "an out-of-body experience" (*Dallas Morning News*). Since taking first prizes at the Leeds International Pianoforte Competition and the Hamamatsu International Piano Competition in Japan, Bax has won audiences across the globe. In 2009 he was awarded an Avery Fisher Career Grant, one of the most prestigious prizes in classical music.

Highlights of Bax's 2010-11 season include appearances as soloist with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra in the UK and the Colorado Symphony under Marin Alsop, solo recitals at New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Harriman-Jewell series in Kansas City, and the second year of his residency with the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center as a member of CMS Two. This past summer Bax performed a noteworthy "Carte Blanche" recital at Music@Menlo in California between engagements at Schloss Elmau in Germany, a Japan tour, chamber music in Fort Worth, Lexington, and at the Bard Music Festival, and recitals and orchestral dates in Spain. He also recorded a Rachmaninoff album in Wales for future release.

Alessio Bax's extensive concerto repertoire has led to appearances with over 80 orchestras, including the London Philharmonic, Royal Philharmonic, Royal Scottish National, Dallas Symphony, Houston Symphony, Indianapolis Symphony, Rome Symphony, Spanish Radio and Television Orchestra, and the NHK Symphony Orchestra. He has worked with a number of esteemed conductors such as Marin Alsop, Alexander Dimitriev, Vernon Handley, Jonathan Nott, Vasily Petrenko, Dmitry Sitkovetsky and Sir Simon Rattle.

Bax's festival appearances include London's International Piano Series (Queen Elizabeth Hall), the Verbier Festival in Switzerland, England's Aldeburgh and Bath festivals, and the Ruhr Klavierfestival and BeethovenFest in Germany. He has performed in recital at music halls in Rome, Milan, Madrid, Paris, London, Tel Aviv, Tokyo, Seoul, Hong Kong, New York, and Washington DC. His fall recital in Mexico City was cited as a "Best Performance of 2009" by *L'Orfeo: Música Clásica Hoy*. Also an active chamber musician, he has collaborated with Emanuel Ax, Joshua Bell, Andrés Díaz, Pamela Frank, and Steven Isserlis, among others.

Bax's 2009 recording, *Bach Transcribed*, received rave reviews from *Gramophone* magazine ("awesome") and *Fanfare* ("this disc is a must"). *Baroque Reflections*, his 2004 release for Warner Classics, was selected as a *Gramophone* "Editor's Choice" and *American Record Guide* "Critics' Choice" ("a disc to treasure"). In 2005, Bax and pianist Lucille Chung recorded Saint-Saëns' *Carnival of the Animals* with conductor Miguel Harth-Bedoya and the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra. They have also recorded the complete works for two pianos and piano four hands of György Ligeti on Dynamic Records. In addition, Bax has chronicled the complete works for piano and organ of Marcel Dupré for Naxos, and Brahms Piano Concerto No. 1, live with the New Japan Philharmonic, for Fontec. Also on Fontec, Bax

released a live recording of Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 3 with the Hamamatsu Symphony Orchestra.

In 2005, Alessio Bax was selected to play the Fugue of Beethoven's "Hammerklavier" Sonata for Maestro Daniel Barenboim in Barenboim on Beethoven. The documentary was produced by Channel 13/PBS, in conjunction with Bel Air Media, BBC, and NHK Japan. It was broadcast worldwide and released as a DVD box set in 2006 on the EMI label. His performances are often broadcast live on the BBC, CBC (Canada), RAI (Italy), RTVE (Spain), NHK (Japan), WDR, NDR and Bayerische Rundfunk (Germany), Hungarian Radio Television, Serbian RTE, among others.

Alessio Bax graduated with top honors at the record age of 14 from the conservatory of his hometown in Bari, Italy. He studied in France with François-Joël Thiollier, and attended the Chigiana Academy in Siena under Joaquín Achúcarro. He moved to Dallas in 1994 to continue his studies with Achúcarro at SMU's Meadows School of the Arts. He is now on the teaching faculty there. He and his wife, pianist Lucille Chung, reside in New York City.

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