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News Release

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MUSIC INSPIRES! THE HOUSTON SYMPHONY ANNOUNCES ITS 2011-2012 SEASON

Orbit – An HD Odyssey; New ACCESS Series; Rach-Fest

HOUSTON (January 16, 2011) – This morning, the Houston Symphony announced its upcoming 2011-12 season of Classical, Pops and Family concerts. In line with the Symphony's mission, enriching concerts fill each weekend with inspiration and bring innovative, first-class performances to the extensive cultural scene in Houston. Dynamic guest artists, Music Director Hans Graf and Principal Pops Conductor Michael Krajewski will collaborate with the 85 members of the Houston Symphony in performances that span many musical genres and four centuries of composition. Highlights include season-opening performances of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony; a three-week-long tribute to Rachmaninoff; *Orbit – An HD Odyssey*, the sequel to the internationally renowned *Planets* project; ACCESS, a new concert format for today's ever-evolving audience and appearances by many talented conductors, some of whom are vying to be the Houston Symphony's next music director, following the end of Hans Graf's successful tenure in 2013.

Inspiring Music

Stellar Artists, Beloved Repertoire

As always, the Houston Symphony brings powerful programming to the fourth largest city in the country. Under the direction of Music Director Hans Graf, the 2011-12 season will open with two performances of the inspirational "Ode to Joy" Beethoven Symphony No. 9 on September 9 and 10, 2011, and will close with dramatic performances of *Carmina Burana* by Carl Orff on May 17-20, 2012. These concerts, along with many others during the season, will also feature the talented

Houston Symphony Chorus under the direction of Charles Hausmann. In addition, the Symphony will showcase a feast of classical offerings including Elgar's Enigma Variations; a special commissioned work by Pierre Jalbert of Rice University that will honor the tenth anniversary of the 9/11 tragedy; Beethoven's Symphony No. 5; Mozart's Eine kleine Nachtmusik; and Berg's Violin Concerto featuring the Symphony's concertmaster, Frank Huang.

Many friends of the Houston Symphony will be returning to Jones Hall including violinists James Ehnes and Hilary Hahn, soprano and Houston Grand Opera Studio alum, Albina Shagimuratova, and extraordinary pianists André Watts, Olga Kern and Emanuel Ax.

Debuting artists are in abundance in 2011-12. The Symphony welcomes cellist Daniel Mueller-Schott, percussionist Colin Currie, violinist Chloe Hanslip, and guest conductors David Afkham, Gilbert Varga, Christoph Koenig, Edward Gardner, Jakub Hrůša, John Storgårds, Vasily Petrenko, Alexander Shelley, and Pablo Heras-Casado.

"The upcoming season demonstrates the impressive breadth of the Houston Symphony," said Graf. "We will welcome back to Houston some of the world's most accomplished guest artists, some young talent just bursting onto the scene and, as always, we offer a bounty of music that will stimulate, excite, entertain and hopefully inspire you. I am looking forward to it!"

Orbit – An HD Odyssey

Orbit – An HD Odyssey is coming! Following the success of *The Planets – An HD Odyssey*, with glowing reviews, sell-out concerts, a well-received UK tour, and a best-selling DVD/Blu-ray disc, the sequel is being launched. The Houston Symphony has once again commissioned producer/director Duncan Copp to create an out-of-this-world, high-definition film to accompany a live orchestral performance by the Houston Symphony. *Orbit – An HD Odyssey* will focus on planet Earth. Featuring John Adams' Short Ride in a Fast Machine and Strauss' Also sprach Zarathustra, high-definition images from NASA's shuttle missions, the International Space Station and satellites orbiting Earth will be spun together to tell an awe-inspiring story of our home planet's land, sea

and sky. The world-premiere performance of this Symphony Special concert will occur on February 18, 2012.

Christoph Eschenbach

Former Houston Symphony Music Director, Christoph Eschenbach, will return to Jones Hall on December 6 for a one-night-only, Symphony Special performance with the musicians of the Houston Symphony. Eschenbach returns to the podium, for the first time since February 2002, to lead the Houston Symphony in Mahler's momentous Symphony No. 5.

Rachmaninoff Festival

It will be a month full of Rachmaninoff programming in January 2012 for a three-weekend concert extravaganza called "Rach Fest." Included in the line-up will be all four Rachmaninoff piano concertos, performed by celebrated young pianist and 2010 Gilmore Artist Award winner, Kirill Gerstein, who will be serving as an artist in residence during the festival. Rachmaninoff, a virtuoso pianist in his own right, wrote hugely demanding music for the keyboard. Gerstein's performance of all four, knuckle-busting concertos in three weeks will be amazing to behold. Interestingly, Houston has a special relationship with Gerstein. In his early years as a fresh face in the industry, he was embraced by the Houston Symphony as a guest soloist. Then, in the days before his most recent appearance with the Houston Symphony in January 2010, Gerstein received the news that he had been awarded the prestigious piano prize, the Gilmore Artist Award.

A New Concert Experience

ACCESS Series

Houston Symphony patrons' yearning for a deeper connection to music and musicians inspired the creation of a new interactive concert series for 2011-12. Along with the aid of celebrity guest host, Miles Hoffman of National Public Radio fame, the ACCESS Series is designed to be a highly accessible and informative approach to a symphony concert. The concerts, a collection of three Friday evenings, will begin an hour earlier at 7:00 p.m. and will be shorter in length (approximately 80 minutes) with no intermission. As ACCESS host, Mr. Hoffman will bring an interactive spin to

the performances such as interviewing artists, conductors, orchestra members or discussing repertoire throughout the concerts. In addition to the music, a pre-concert cocktail party is planned for each night along with post-concert question-and-answer sessions.

"With the ACCESS series, we are aiming to attract both new *and* current audiences who are eager to know more about the music being performed and the musicians involved," said Mark Hanson, Houston Symphony Executive Director and CEO of the Houston Symphony. "Our host, Miles Hoffman, will engage and excite anyone who loves great music! This series is tangible proof of the Houston Symphony's commitment to innovation, experimentation, and engagement."

Even More Music!

Pops

The Pops season continues to provide the "Music You Know, Music You Love" in 2011-12. Kicking off the year on September 2-4 will be "Viva Italia!", an evening of iconic Italian hits like music from *The Godfather* and *Jersey Boys*, *La Traviata* and "Nessun Dorma!,"— all performed by Poperazzi, a pop-opera vocal trio from Las Vegas. *Glee* fans and Baby Boomers alike will delight in several shows. Idina Menzel, star of Broadway's *Rent*, *Wicked* and TV's *Glee*, debuts with the Houston Symphony on October 14-16. "Live and Let Die: The Music of Paul McCartney" comes to Jones Hall with Michael Krajewski conducting on November 4-6 along with a "Tribute to John Denver" on April 5-7, 2012. Also in April, "Cole Porter's Great American Songbook" will entertain audiences with song classics from Broadway and Hollywood. Likewise, movie music will be the star of another concert weekend in January 2012. "The Best of Williams and Spielberg" will showcase the Houston Symphony and Krajewski performing epic music from Stephen Spielberg and John Williams' films. Bowfire! will electrify the stage in March 2012 with their virtuosi fiddle players who play a wide spectrum of musical genres with a show including choreography, dramatic lighting, set design and costumes. The dance-inducing Latin music group, Tiempo Libre, will close the Pops season in May 2012 with their Cuban flair and fusion of classical music and Afro-Cuban rhythms.

"I invite you to experience these incomparable musical evenings featuring tributes to Paul McCartney, John Denver and Cole Porter, journeys to Cuba and Italy, and salutes Hollywood and Broadway. You'll hear the music you love performed by one of America's finest orchestras – your very own Houston Symphony! Come and join us for the fun. I'll see you there," said Krajewski.

Family

Houston Symphony Associate Conductor, Robert Franz, has created another captivating season of family offerings. Fairy tales, *The Little Mermaid* and Houston Astros' Milo Hamilton are all part of the 2011-12 Weatherford Family Concert Series. Families can enjoy an engaging, entertaining experience full of wonderful orchestral music on four Saturday mornings during the season. "Once Upon A Dream: Princes & Princesses" will kick-off the Family series on October 15 with music by composers featuring brave princes and beautiful princesses. "The Night Before Christmas" will be the Family holiday concert on December 3, and the "Music of The Little Mermaid" will delight audiences on March 10, 2012. Rounding out the four-concert series will be "Perfect Pitch: Music of Baseball" on April 28, 2012, where the Houston Astros' announcer and Hall of Fame award-winner, Milo Hamilton, will narrate *Casey at the Bat*.

"I love putting these concerts together for our family audiences," said Franz. "As a fairly new uncle, these concerts are an extension of the time that my niece and I spend dancing and singing together... on a bit of a larger scale! But don't be misled; these concerts are as much for parents and grandparents as they are for kids. The fact that all generations in a family can enjoy the Houston Symphony together makes these concerts very special."

Houston Symphony On The Road

Return to Carnegie Hall

The Houston Symphony has been invited back to Carnegie Hall to participate in the 2012 Spring for Music Festival. With a tag line of "Uncommon Concerts for \$25", the festival is a new and innovative collection of concerts featuring North American symphony and chamber orchestras with

a focus on unique programming at affordable prices. The Houston Symphony will kick-off the 2012 festival with the first performance on May 7, 2012. The week-long event is designed to allow chosen orchestras to showcase their artistic philosophies through distinctive and creative programming in one of the world's most competitive musical environments, Carnegie Hall. The 2012 festival will mark Spring for Music's second festival; May 2011 will be the inaugural run.

Expanding the Symphony's Footprint in Houston

Sugar Land Series

In 2011-12, the Symphony is setting-up shop in Sugar Land in bustling Fort Bend County for a series of three concerts on Thursday evenings beginning at 8:00 p.m. The first two concerts in this new Sugar Land series will feature the Houston Symphony and Chorus in performances of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony and Handel's *Messiah*. The third series performance will be presented in the new ACCESS format – an informative and interactive approach to a symphony concert hosted by Miles Hoffman of National Public Radio fame. The location will be the high-tech, multi-functional, and easy-access performance facilities at Sugar Land Baptist Church on Highway 59.

Looking Ahead

Music Director Search

The Houston Symphony's 2011-12 season will mark the second year in its search for a new music director. As previously announced in October 2009, Hans Graf will end his tenure at the end of the 2012-13 season as the longest serving music director in the organization's history. In January 2010, the Symphony formed a committee of musicians, staff, board members and community leaders to begin the search for a replacement. Among the many guest conductors who visit Jones Hall each season, there are possible music director candidates who are being assessed for their musical leadership, on-stage charisma and communication abilities.

About the Houston Symphony

The Houston Symphony has played a central role in Houston's cultural and civic life since 1913. Each year, the Houston Symphony performs more than 170 concerts for approximately 350,000

people, featuring an innovative and broad spectrum of classical, popular, education and community-based symphonic programming. For tickets and more information, please visit www.houstonsymphony.org or call 713-224-7575.

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