

Press release

Stockholm, Sweden, October 8, 2014

2014 Birgit Nilsson Prize awarded to the VIENNA PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

Prize to be used for VPO Historic Archive: To ensure the future by remembering and documenting the past

Today the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra will be awarded the 2014 Birgit Nilsson Prize in the presence of H.M. King Carl XVI Gustaf of Sweden and H.M. Queen Silvia at a festive ceremony of celebration held at the Concert Hall in Stockholm. The entire Vienna Philharmonic will be in attendance to perform, led by Maestro Riccardo Muti. The Birgit Nilsson Prize of one million dollars, established by Birgit Nilsson herself, is the most generous prize in the world of classical music. The Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra was chosen as the 2014 laureate by an international panel of four music experts from the countries where Birgit Nilsson was most active during her career (see list of names and countries at end of release).

Rutbert Reisch, President of the Birgit Nilsson Foundation, said, "We are so pleased to be honoring the great Vienna Philharmonic as the first institution to receive the Birgit Nilsson Prize. Birgit Nilsson loved working with this orchestra, and we know that this choice would have pleased her greatly. We are also very happy to have the entire Vienna Philharmonic and Maestro Riccardo Muti, our 2011 Prize Laureate, here with us today."

Andreas Grossbauer, President of the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, stated, "The Vienna Philharmonic believes that you ensure your future by remembering and documenting your past. Given the historic significance of the Vienna Philharmonic in music history and the historic significance of Birgit Nilsson herself, the Vienna Philharmonic has unanimously voted to use the entire one million dollar Birgit Nilsson Prize to expand its Historic Archive and to make it more easily accessible."

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Grossbauer continued, "It has long been a dream of the VPO to have a transparent archive which is more accessible and more readily open to the public, to entice young people to view and study this history of almost two centuries, and to provide an environment conducive to scholarly research. This Prize will enable the VPO to establish a permanent home for its vast archive, which has grown appreciably over the past decades. As the VPO moves forward into the next century, its historic context and legacy will now be assured."

HISTORY OF THE VIENNA PHILHARMONIC HISTORIC ARCHIVE

The VPO Historic Archive has existed since the orchestra's inception in 1842. In 1979, Clemens Hellsberg was appointed the first VPO Historical Archivist (he is also a violinist in and former president of the VPO). The original setting was in a small section of the VPO library in the Musikverein. As the collection grew, the Archive was moved to a separate room in the Musikverein, and in the year 2000 was moved into the Haus der Musik in Vienna (www.hdm.at), where the VPO Museum is housed. Currently this space is too small and cramped, allowing no room for growth. The Birgit Nilsson Prize gives the VPO the opportunity to affirm years of work in preserving the incredible VPO history and to expand. The dream to properly unite the Archive with the VPO Museum now has the possibility of being realized with more space and more possibilities for documentation and research.

Highlights of the evening in honour of the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra

Rutbert Reisch, President of the Birgit Nilsson Foundation, opens the evening festivities in the Stockholm Concert Hall. The evening's mistress of ceremonies Pia Lindström, daughter of Ingrid Bergman, delivers the laudatio in honour of the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra. In the presence of H.M. King Carl XVI Gustaf, the Birgit Nilsson Prize is presented to the Vienna Philharmonic representatives Andreas Grossbauer, President, and Clemens Hellsberg, former President, of the Vienna Philharmonic. The VPO performs Liszt's *Les Préludes* and an orchestral version of Wagner's *Liebestod* under the direction of Maestro Riccardo Muti, the 2011 Birgit Nilsson Prize Laureate.

Following the ceremony, the entire audience is invited to a cocktail reception at the Concert Hall hosted by the Birgit Nilsson Foundation. For invited guests, a Gala Dinner in the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra's honour is hosted by the Foundation at the Grand Hotel in the presence of H.M. King Carl XVI Gustaf and H.M. Queen Silvia.

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About the prize

The extraordinary Birgit Nilsson Prize of one million dollars, the largest given in the world of classical music, is awarded approximately every 3 years for outstanding achievements and major contributions to the field of opera/concert to a currently active singer (in the field of opera, concert, oratorio, or lieder); a currently active conductor (in the field of opera or concert); an institution with an outstanding record in opera or concert, such as an orchestra, a chorus, or an opera company (in the case of an opera company, specifically in recognition of an exceptional production that respects the spirit of the composer).

This is the third time that the Prize will be given. Before her death, Birgit Nilsson personally chose the first laureate, Plácido Domingo, who received the award in 2009. In 2011, the second laureate, conductor Riccardo Muti, was selected by a distinguished international panel of classical music experts from the major countries where Birgit Nilsson was most active during her career. The panel members, who are appointed by and work with the Foundation's board and who serve for three year cycles, have remained the same for 2011 and 2014. They are:

- Germany: Eva Wagner-Pasquier, Co-Director of the Bayreuth Festival
- Sweden: Bengt Hall, Managing Director of the Malmö Opera, and former General Manager of the Royal Swedish Opera Stockholm
- United Kingdom: Rupert Christiansen, Opera Critic of the Daily Telegraph and Member of the Editorial Board of OPERA
- USA: Speight Jenkins, former General Director of the Seattle Opera
- Austria: Clemens Hellsberg, former President of the Vienna Philharmonic
(NOTE: Mr. Hellsberg was a member of the 2011 panel but recused himself from the 2014 panel.)

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