

PRESS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Date: 17 October 2019

Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra wins *Gramophone* Orchestra of the Year Award

[17 October 2019, Hong Kong] The **Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra (HK Phil)** was named Orchestra of the Year at the 2019 *Gramophone* Classical Music Awards ceremony – regarded as the “Oscars of classical music” – in London on Wednesday (16 October 2019) for its outstanding contribution to recorded music in the past year. The HK Phil is the first Asian orchestra to receive this prestigious international award.

The Award “celebrates ensembles that have made significant recorded contributions in the past year and reflects the excellence of music-making across the globe”. The Award was for the HK Phil’s live recordings of the complete *Ring* Cycle by Richard Wagner on the Naxos label.

“Our Orchestra of the Year 2019, the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra, is a perfect example of an ensemble galvanised by an inspirational Music Director to give of its best. The *Ring* Cycle, conducted by Jaap van Zweden and recorded live by Naxos, is a magnificent achievement and clearly prompted numerous music-lovers from all over the globe to vote for this outstanding Asian orchestra. *Gramophone* is delighted to salute the HK Phil on this much-deserved triumph,” commented James Jolly, Editor-in-Chief, *Gramophone*.

Under the dynamic leadership of Music Director Jaap van Zweden, the HK Phil completed a four-year project to perform and record Wagner’s *Ring* Cycle. The full box-set of the cycle was released in November 2018, making the HK Phil the first orchestra in Hong Kong to accomplish such a venture.

Jaap van Zweden said, “The HK Phil is especially proud since we are making history by being the first orchestra in Asia to receive this prestigious and highly acclaimed honour.” Chief Executive Benedikt Fohr deems the accomplishment “a powerful demonstration of the HK Phil’s truly world-class quality. We are so proud of the full team of the HK Phil, including Music Director Jaap van Zweden, our musicians and members of staff, the distinguished soloists and Naxos’ production team, who realised this enormous project with great energy and supreme artistry.” Klaus Heymann, Chairman of the Naxos Music Group, who helped transform the HK Phil into a fully professional orchestra in 1974 said, “Not in my wildest dreams would I have imagined the orchestra would ever record the complete *Ring* to international acclaim and win *Gramophone*’s Orchestra of the Year. It’s a tremendous achievement for the players as well as the Music Director, Jaap van Zweden. Thank you to my international team for bringing this achievement to the attention of the world.” The HK Phil is deeply grateful to the Home Affairs Bureau of the Hong Kong SAR Government for supporting this project through the Contestable Funding Pilot Scheme.

The HK Phil competed with nine other major international ensembles for this Award: Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin, Staatskapelle Berlin, Boston Symphony Orchestra, Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, London Symphony Orchestra, Orchestra dell’Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia - Rome, San Francisco Symphony and Les Siècles. The nominees were chosen by *Gramophone* magazine’s editors and critics, and the winner was decided by a public vote.

This Award adds momentum to the HK Phil’s quest to expand its international reputation and inspire audiences in and beyond Hong Kong. The HK Phil will perform in Japan and Korea in 2020 and is planning to tour Europe in 2021 and the US in 2022.

The HK Phil extends its heartfelt gratitude to its supporters including the Hong Kong SAR Government, Principal Patron the Swire Group, and music-lovers in Hong Kong and around the world who voted for the HK Phil to receive this Award.

Click the thumbnails to download press images [Or hold Ctrl then click to open the file]



(From left to right) Mr Andrew Ling, Principal Viola of the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra; Mr Andrew Simon, Principal Clarinet of the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra; Mr Benedikt Fohr, Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra; and Mr Y. S. Liu, MH, Chairman of the Board of Governors of the Hong Kong Philharmonic Society Limited, received the Orchestra of the Year Award at the 2019 *Gramophone* Classical Music Awards ceremony on behalf of the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra.

Photo Credit: Gem Rey/HK Phil



(From left to right) Mr Andrew Ling, Principal Viola of the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra; Mr James Jolly, Editor-in-Chief, *Gramophone*; Mr Y. S. Liu, MH, Chairman of the Board of Governors of the Hong Kong Philharmonic Society Limited; Mr Benedikt Fohr, Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra; and Mr Andrew Simon, Principal Clarinet of the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra.

Photo Credit: Gem Rey/HK Phil



Jaap van Zweden video acceptance of Orchestra of the Year Award at the *Gramophone* Awards 2019

Photo Credit: Askew Miller



Vote of thanks by Mr Benedikt Fohr, Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra, at the 2019 *Gramophone* Classical Music Awards ceremony.

Photo Credit: Gem Rey/HK Phil



(From left to right) Mrs Vennie Ho, Senior Director of Administration and Finance of the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra; Mr Andrew Ling, Principal Viola of the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra; Mr Y. S. Liu, MH, Chairman of the Board of Governors of the Hong Kong Philharmonic Society Limited; Mr Edward Ng, Fundraising Committee Chair of the Board of Governors of the Hong Kong Philharmonic Society Limited; Mr Benedikt Fohr, Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra; Mr Andrew Simon, Principal Clarinet of the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra; Mrs Janice Choi, MH, JP, Vice-Chair of the Board of Governors of the Hong Kong Philharmonic Society Limited; and Ms Meggy Cheng, Director of Marketing of the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra.

Photo Credit: Gem Rey/HK Phil

Click the thumbnails to download press images [Or hold Ctrl then click to open the file]



梵志登 音樂總監
Jaap van Zweden Music Director

余隆 首席客席指揮
Yu Long Principal Guest Conductor

Ms Winky So, Director-General of the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office, London; Ms Noel Ng, Deputy Director-General of the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office, London; Mr Yu Peng, Minister Counsellor for Cultural Affairs, Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the UK; Ms Mo Xia, Attaché, Cultural Office, Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the UK; the Naxos team; and the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra team shared the joy together at the 2019 *Gramophone* Classical Music Awards ceremony.

Photo Credit: Gem Rey/HK Phil



The Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra was named Orchestra of the Year at the 2019 Gramophone Classical Music Awards ceremony.

Photo Credit: Gem Rey/HK Phil



Jaap van Zweden, Music Director of the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra

Photo Credit: Cheung Chi-wai/HK Phil



Götterdämmerung Opera-in-concert

Photo Credit: Eric Hong/HK Phil



Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra

Photo Credit: Cheung Wai-lok/HK Phil



The *Ring Cycle* Box-set

Photo Credit: Naxos

More about HK Phil's Epic Journey of Wagner's *Ring Cycle*

Under Jaap van Zweden, the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra embarked on a four-year journey to perform the entire *Ring Cycle* (*Das Rheingold*, *Die Walküre*, *Siegfried* and *Götterdämmerung*). The orchestra performed one opera annually between 2015 and 2018 in concerts featuring 36 stellar Wagnerian singers and three choruses. Altogether the orchestra gave eight performances of the four operas running to a total of 15 hours and 20 minutes, and attracting an audience of 13,000. Over 100 members of the media attended and generated consistently enthusiastic reviews. The HK Phil is the first orchestra in Asia to accomplish such a venture. The *Ring Cycle* operas-in-concerts were recorded live and released on the Naxos label.

Critical Acclaim for the HK Phil's *Ring Cycle*

“A Ring from Hong Kong to take on the world.”

--- Hugo Shirley, *Gramophone*

“You’re hearing one of the best Wagner orchestras in the world.”

--- Geoff Brown, *The Times*

“[The HK Phil] “is always utterly secure and ever responsive to [Jaap] van Zweden’s fine-grained control. There’s never a shortage of lustre or refinement...”

--- Andrew Clements, *The Guardian*

“*Götterdämmerung* was his [Jaap van Zweden] crowning glory and, by most measures, a phenomenal success.”

--- Alan Yu, *Bachtrack*

The HK Phil would like to thank the Home Affairs Bureau of the Hong Kong SAR Government and its partners including the Hong Kong Cultural Centre, the Goethe-Institut Hongkong, Swire Group, Chow Sang Sang, Naxos, *The New York Times*, the *Ring Circle* Members, all the patrons and members of the audience for their generous support.

--- END ---

For further press information please contact:

Meggy Cheng, Director of Marketing

Tel: +852 2721 9035 Email: meggy.cheng@hkphil.org

Flora Fung, Media Relations and Communications Manager

Tel: +852 2721 1585 Email: flora.fung@hkphil.org

Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra

Music Director: Jaap van Zweden

Principal Guest Conductor: Yu Long

The Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra (HK Phil) is recognised as Asia's foremost classical orchestra. Presenting more than 150 concerts over a 44-week season, the HK Phil attracts more than 200,000 music lovers annually. In 2019, the HK Phil received the prestigious *Gramophone* Orchestra of the Year Award – the first orchestra in Asia to receive this distinction.

Jaap van Zweden, one of today's most sought-after conductors, has been the orchestra's Music Director since the 2012/13 concert season, a position he will continue to hold until at least 2022. Maestro van Zweden is also Music Director of the New York Philharmonic since the 2018/19 season.

Yu Long has been Principal Guest Conductor since the 2015/16 season.

Under the dynamic leadership of Jaap van Zweden, the HK Phil has attained new heights of artistic excellence, garnering international critical acclaim. The orchestra successfully completed a four-year journey through Wagner's *Ring Cycle*, performing and recording one opera from the cycle each year from 2015 to 2018. The concert performances and live Naxos recordings were enthusiastically received by audiences, praised by critics at home and abroad and garnered *Gramophone* Orchestra of the Year Award 2019.

The HK Phil tours extensively across Mainland China and, with the support of the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Offices, undertook a major tour in 2017 to Seoul, Osaka, Singapore, Melbourne and Sydney in celebration of the 20th anniversary of the establishment of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. The orchestra will perform in Japan and Korea in 2020.

Thanks to a significant subsidy from the Hong Kong SAR Government and long-term funding from Principal Patron Swire, the Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust and other supporters, the HK Phil presents an annual schedule of core classical repertoire and innovative popular programming, extensive education and community programmes, and collaborations with, among others, Opera Hong Kong, the Hong Kong Arts Festival and the Hong Kong Ballet.

Conductors and soloists who have recently performed with the orchestra include Vladimir Ashkenazy, Joshua Bell, Charles Dutoit, Christoph Eschenbach, Matthias Goerne, Stephen Hough, Evgeny Kissin, Lang Lang, Yo-Yo Ma, Ning Feng, Leonard Slatkin and Yuja Wang.

The HK Phil promotes the work of Hong Kong and Chinese composers through an active commissioning programme, and has released recordings on the Naxos label featuring Tan Dun and Bright Sheng conducting their own compositions. Its acclaimed education and community engagement programmes in schools, hospitals and outdoor spaces bring music into the hearts of tens of thousands of children and families every year.

The Swire Group has been the Principal Patron of the HK Phil since 2006. Through this sponsorship, which is the largest in the orchestra's history, Swire endeavours to promote artistic excellence, foster access to classical music, stimulate cultural participation in Hong Kong, and enhance Hong Kong's reputation as one of the great cities in the world.

Originally called the Sino-British Orchestra, it was renamed the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra in 1957 and became fully professional in 1974. The HK Phil is a charitable organisation.

The Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra is financially supported by the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and is a Venue Partner of the Hong Kong Cultural Centre. SWIRE is the Principal Patron of the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra.