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Contact: [Jessica Di Santo](#) – (317) 229-7082

### **Former ISO Music Director John Nelson Returns to Conduct Brahms' *Requiem* Nov. 2 and 3**

*Featuring soprano Aga Mikolaj, baritone Nathan Berg and the Indianapolis Symphonic Choir, Nelson dedicates performance of Brahms' masterpiece to his wife, Anita Nelson (1941-2012)*

INDIANAPOLIS – The Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra and its former Music Director John Nelson will be joined by two vocalists and the Indianapolis Symphonic Choir to perform Johannes Brahms' largest work, *Ein Deutsches Requiem* (A German Requiem), in Lilly *Classical Series* concerts Nov. 2 and 3, at 8 p.m. in the Hilbert Circle Theatre.

The concert opens with Mozart's *Exsultate, jubilate*, a work penned in 1773 for solo voice and orchestra. The ISO is joined by soprano Aga Mikolaj for this joyful work, Mozart's celebration of his opera hall successes. Written in three parts, *Exsultate, jubilate* was originally intended for a castrato singer, now more commonly performed by a female singer. The text is religious but the colorful, uplifted character and vocal virtuosity are strongly reminiscent of Mozart's opera arias.

Following intermission, the concert continues with Johannes Brahms' *A German Requiem*. Begun in 1865 after the death of his mother — and perhaps still thinking of his friend, Robert Schumann's death years before — Brahms himself wrote the libretto, drawing from Biblical texts. Unlike the Catholic Mass for the Dead, the focus is not on the deceased until the final moments of the work, focusing instead on spiritual introspection. Brahms' economical use of the orchestra's colors, baritone and soprano soloists, and choir portray emotions ranging from quiet intimacy to somber reflection. Through brilliant harmonic and emotional voyages, *A German Requiem* is a masterpiece of the orchestral and choral canon. More than 170 members of the Indianapolis Symphonic Choir will be a part of this performance.

Maestro John Nelson held the post of Music Director of the ISO from 1976 to 1987, a significant period in the Orchestra's history when it celebrated its golden anniversary in the 1979-80 season, added outdoor performances at Conner Prairie Amphitheatre in 1982 (now the Marsh *Symphony on the Prairie* series), and moved to its new home on Monument Circle in downtown Indianapolis in 1984. Since 1987, he has made three appearances as guest conductor with the ISO (1989, 2002 and 2004). Central to Nelson's work is the interpretation of the great sacred choral literature. The last time he conducted *A German Requiem* with the ISO was in 1983, and he dedicates this performance to his wife, Anita, who lost her battle with cancer on Oct. 12, 2012.

"This monumental work, one of the greatest in the classical repertoire, was conceived as a memorial to the composer's mother after she died. The biblical texts are the most profoundly powerful sentiments for me at this moment in my life," said Nelson. "I am privileged to conduct the Brahms *Requiem* with my former orchestra, the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra, in the company of so many people that Anita and I loved and lived with for 11 years. How could anyone other than God in heaven know how perfect the timing of this musical memorial would be for me."

An hour before the concert, patrons are invited to attend *Words on Music*, a 30-minute pre-concert talk hosted by Assistant Conductor David Glover that features musicians, guest artists and conductors. Following the performance, concertgoers are invited to mingle with ISO musicians and guest artists during *Reverb*, where complimentary wine sampling, courtesy of Tastings, and a cash bar will be provided in the lobby.

Lilly *Classical Series* concert tickets range from \$20-\$75 and may be ordered in person, by calling the Hilbert Circle Theatre Box Office at (317) 639-4300, or online by visiting [www.IndianapolisSymphony.org](http://www.IndianapolisSymphony.org). To order by telephone outside of Indianapolis, call toll free (800) 366-8457.

Eli Lilly and Company is the Title Sponsor of the 2012-2013 Lilly *Classical Series* and ExactTarget is the Premiere Sponsor. The performance of classical music, including major liturgical and choral music, is endowed in memory of Elmer Andrew and Maguerite Maass Steffen by E. Andrew Steffen.

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### **Artist Biographies:**

Internationally renowned for his interpretation of the large romantic repertoire, including the great works of Berlioz, **John Nelson** has conducted most of the world's top orchestras including the London Symphony Orchestra, Orchestre de Paris, Leipzig Gewandhaus, Chicago Symphony, Philadelphia and Cleveland Orchestras and the New York Philharmonic. Nelson's varied repertoire has also taken him to many of the world's major opera houses including the Metropolitan Opera, the Chicago Lyric, Opéra National de Paris and the Netherlands Opera.

Central to John Nelson's work is the interpretation of the great sacred choral literature. He is presently conducting a series of live DVD performances of this repertoire including Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis* with the Chamber Orchestra of Europe, Haydn's *Die Schöpfung* with the Netherlands Radio Kammerphilharmonie and Bach's *St Matthew Passion* with the Ensemble Orchestral de Paris. He is the recipient of numerous awards including a Grammy for his recording of Handel's *Semele* on the Deutsche Grammophon label and a *Diapason d'Or de l'Année* for Berlioz's *Béatrice et Bénédict* on Erato.

Born in Costa Rica, John Nelson studied at the Juilliard School, New York, where he won the Irving Berlin prize in conducting. He has held the title of Music Director of the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra, Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, and Caramoor Music Festival in New York. From 1998 to 2008 he was Directeur Musicale of the Ensemble Orchestral de Paris. He has also been Principal Guest Conductor of the Orchestre National de Lyon and Artistic Adviser to the Nashville and Louisville Orchestras. Nelson made his professional opera debut at the New York City Opera in Bizet's *Carmen* and his Metropolitan Opera debut stepping in at short notice to replace an indisposed Rafael Kubelik in Berlioz's *Les Troyens*. It was this occasion that catapulted him into the limelight and led to his European debut at *Grand Théâtre de Genève* for *Les Troyens* and his French debut at the Berlioz Festival, Lyon for a production of *Béatrice et Bénédict*.

Recent and future engagements include Boston Symphony, Chamber Orchestra of Europe, Cincinnati Symphony, Danish National Symphony, Royal Flanders Philharmonic, Singapore Symphony, Sydney Symphony and Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestras. Opera engagements include performances at the *Grand Théâtre de Genève* of Weber's *Der Freischütz* and Berlioz's *La damnation de Faust*, *Les Troyens* and Mozart's *Idomeneo* at Netherlands Opera and at La Monnaie Mozart's *La finta giardiniera*.

A student of the late Dame Elisabeth Schwarzkopf, **Aga Mikolaj's** repertoire focuses on Mozart leading ladies – Countess, Pamina, Fiordiligi, Donna Elvira – and is equally at ease with key lyric soprano roles and Richard Strauss in particular. From 2002-2007, Aga Mikolaj was a member of Munich's Bayerische Staatsoper, where she continues to perform regularly. She has also worked with Opéra National de Paris, Wiener Staatsoper, Teatro alla Scala, Deutsche Oper Berlin, Staatsoper unter den Linden and the

Glyndebourne Festival. Miss Mikolaj has performed with many conductors, including Zubin Mehta, Kent Nagano and Philippe Jordan. She made her Teatro alla Scala debut in *Das Rheingold* with Daniel Barenboim, her Berlin Staatsoper unter den Linden debut with Gustavo Dudamel in *Don Giovanni* and performed for the first time with the Wiener Staatsoper under Seiji Ozawa in *Don Giovanni* on a tour of Japan.

Aga Mikolaj has a diverse repertoire featuring works by composers such as Mahler, Beethoven, Schubert, Richard Strauss, Penderecki and Szymanowski and has recently appeared with the Halle Orchestra conducted by Sir Mark Elder, the Rundfunk Symphonieorchester Berlin with by Marek Janowski and the Warsaw Philharmonic Orchestra and Antoni Wit.

Other highlights include the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the Munich's Bayerische Staatsoper as Freia in a new production of *Das Rheingold* and the New National Theatre in Tokyo with Enrique Mazzola. In addition to performances of *Carmen* in Munich, Aga Mikolaj returns to Berlin to sing *Das Rheingold* with Daniel Barenboim and broadens her concert repertoire with Verdi's *Messa da Requiem* with the Malmö Symphony Orchestra.

**Nathan Berg's** career to date has encompassed a vast range of styles and repertoire and he is currently in demand by some of the world's most distinguished conductors including Kurt Masur, Esa-Pekka Salonen, William Christie, Roger Norrington and Michael Tilson Thomas. In his early career Nathan Berg made his name as an outstanding interpreter of the baroque and pre-classical repertoire in both concert and opera performances in many of the world's most prestigious houses and venues. More recently he has added the leading Mozart roles to his repertoire including the title roles in *Don Giovanni* and *Le nozze di Figaro* in New York, London, Paris and Vancouver and his performance as Alidoro in the Glyndebourne Festival's production of Rossini's *La Cenerentola* was captured for release on DVD. Striking new additions to his repertoire have included debuts in the title roles of *Der fliegende Holländer* and *Bluebeard's Castle* and as Scarpia in Puccini's *Tosca*.

Highlights in the 2011/2012 season include his debut performances of Mahler's *Kindertotenlieder* with Ludovic Morlot and the Seattle Symphony Orchestra as well as performing in Beethoven's *Symphony No. 9* with Michael Tilson Thomas and the San Francisco Symphony. In Europe he performs with Le Concert Spirituel in Handel's *Theodora* on tour to Paris, Metz, Brussels and Vienna; and new production of *Les Indes galantes* at the Théâtre du Capitole in Toulouse under Christoph Rousset.

A Grammy nominated and Juno Award winning artist, recording highlights include extensive collaborations with Les Arts Florissants, including Handel's *Messiah* and Mozart's *Requiem*, various lieder recordings including songs by Othmar Schoeck and the album 'Lieder Recital' with Julius Drake, Dvořák's *Stabat Mater* with Robert Shaw and the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra. Recent DVD releases include Lully's *Armide* from the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées under William Christie.

Born in Saskatchewan, Canada, Nathan Berg studied in Canada, America, Paris and at the Guildhall School of Music where he won the Gold Medal for Singers. In recital he has appeared at the Wigmore Hall, Lincoln Center and many other prestigious venues around the world with pianists such as Graham Johnson, Julius Drake, Roger Vignoles and Martin Katz.

### **In Brief:**

Led by former ISO Music Director John Nelson, the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra and the Indianapolis Symphonic Choir present Brahms' *Requiem*.

Performers: Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra

Indianapolis Symphonic Choir

Conductor: John Nelson

Artists: Aga Mikolaj, Soprano  
Nathan Berg, Baritone

Location: Hilbert Circle Theatre

Dates & Time: Friday, Nov. 2, 8 p.m.; Saturday, Nov. 3, 8 p.m.

Tickets: \$20-\$75; (317) 639-4300; Toll Free (800) 366-8457; online at  
[www.IndianapolisSymphony.org](http://www.IndianapolisSymphony.org)