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Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra Performs World Premiere of Pianist & Composer Stephen Hough's *Missa Mirabilis* April 6-7

Hough to also perform Mendelssohn's first piano concerto on concert weekend and will host live Q&A on Twitter April 2 from 7-8 p.m. (EDT)

INDIANAPOLIS – The Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra will perform the world premiere of renowned pianist and composer Stephen Hough's *Missa Mirabilis*, written for orchestra and chorus, and Hough will perform Felix Mendelssohn's Piano Concerto No. 1 to highlight the ISO's Lilly *Classical Series* concerts Friday and Saturday, April 6 and 7, at 8 p.m. at the Hilbert Circle Theatre. These concerts also will feature the vocal forces of the Indianapolis Symphonic Choir.

Hough originally wrote *Missa Mirabilis* for the Westminster Chorus and after hearing the first performance, he desired to transform it into a symphonic work for a chorus and full orchestra. A Catholic, Hough said, "My *Missa Mirabilis*, as well as being a musical setting of the traditional Mass texts, explores some of the psychology behind them. The centerpiece of the work is the Creed – but what does believing mean? What if we don't believe? Or if it's all become jaded? Or if we fear our failing faith?"

In the Creed, he divides the upper and lower voices to distinguish this conflict between belief and doubt with the sopranos and altos singing the word "Credo" to interrupt the fast-paced mutterings of the text by the tenors and baritones. His *Sanctus* and *Benedictus* contrast the divine and the human, blazing chords with trumpets (*Holy, Holy, Holy*) changing to a softly-sung *Benedictus* heard as if in the distance. The *Agnus Dei* builds to a climax in a sort of despair until the *Dona Nobis Pacem* finally arrives. The mood suddenly calms and returns to the music from the beginning of the work, the gentle *Kyrie*, as peace and mercy are finally united. The symphonic version of this Mass was commissioned by the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra.

When asked why he used the term *Mirabilis*, Hough said, "*Mirabilis* means 'miraculous' and it is purely personal. I gathered a year's-worth of sketches for the *Mass* together in September 2006 and wrote three of the movements in three days while visiting the Halle Orchestra. The following day, I had a serious car crash, overturning on the motorway at 80 mph; I stepped out of the untouched door of my completely mangled car with my *Mass* manuscript and body intact. I was conscious as I was somersaulting with screeching acrobatics on the highway, and one regret which went through my mind was that I would never get to hear this piece. Someone had other ideas."

"Of the two remaining movements, I sketched the *Agnus Dei* in St. Mary's Hospital a few days later, waiting four hours for a brain scan following the crash, and the *Gloria* later still while sitting in a practice room at the Hilbert Circle Theatre on a visit to play with the Indianapolis Symphony. I never did think at the time that I would orchestrate the piece and that it would receive its premiere in that same building," he added.

The program, conducted by Nicholas McGegan, will open with Franz Joseph Haydn's Symphony No. 30 in C Major, ("Alleluia"), a work that is thematically based on the Gregorian Easter Chant that celebrates the risen Christ on Easter morning. The program also includes Johannes Brahms' *Gesang Der Parzen* ("Song of the Fates"), a choral work that utilizes the text from Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's treatment of

Euripides' *Iphigenie in Tauris*, and the concert will conclude with Hough as soloist in Mendelssohn's popular Piano Concerto No. 1 in G Minor.

On Monday, April 2, from 7-8 p.m. (EDT), Hough will host an hour-long "Tweet-up" question-and-answer session on Twitter. Participants will be able to ask Hough questions about his work by using the hashtag #HoughISO. Follow Stephen Hough on Twitter at www.twitter.com/houghhough.

Ticket prices for Lilly *Classical Series* concerts range from \$20 to \$75 each and may be ordered by calling the Hilbert Circle Theatre Box Office at (317) 639-4300, in person, or online by visiting 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 entire 2011-2012 Lilly *Classical Series* season and ExactTarget is the Premiere Sponsor for the Lilly *Classical Series*. The performance of Classical Music, including major liturgical and choral music, is endowed in memory of Elmer Andrew and Marguerite Maas Steffen by E. Andrew Steffen.

Artist Biographies

Celebrating his 25th year as Music Director of the San Francisco-based Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra and Philharmonia Chorale, **Nicholas McGegan** has established his ensemble among the leading period performance orchestras in America. He has been a pioneer in the process of exporting historically informed practice beyond the world of period instruments to a wider scope of full symphonic forces, including the Cleveland and Philadelphia Orchestras, the New York and Los Angeles Philharmonics, and the Chicago, St. Louis, Toronto and Sydney Symphony Orchestras, among others. Two recent additions to his discography of more than 100 releases include Berlioz' *Les Nuits d'été* and selected Handel arias with the late Lorraine Hunt Lieberson, and Haydn Symphonies Nos. 88, 101 and 104, both on their new label, Philharmonia Baroque Productions. His last ISO appearance was in April 2001, when he conducted an all-Haydn program.

A favorite among Indianapolis music lovers, pianist **Stephen Hough** is widely regarded as one of the most important and distinctive pianists of his generation. He has appeared with most of the major American and European orchestras and plays recitals regularly in music capitals around the world. Hough has recorded more than 40 compact discs, has garnered several Grammy Award nominations and has earned eight *Grammophone Awards*, including "Record of the Year," twice and in 2008, the "Gold Disc" Award. Also an author and composer, his book *The Bible as Prayer* was published in the U.S. and Canada in 2007 and as a composer, his recent commissions include a cello concerto, *The Loneliest Wilderness*; a trio, *Was mit den Tränen geschieht*, commissioned by members of the Berlin Philharmonic; a sonata for piano, *Broken Branches*; and the orchestration of *Missa Mirabilis*. Hough last performed with the ISO in March 2010, when he played Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No. 1.

Founded in 1937 and celebrating its 75th anniversary season, the **Indianapolis Symphonic Choir** has partnered with the ISO each season to perform great choral masterworks and presents its own season of concerts and educational outreach programs that reach more than 50,000 people each year. In addition to the choral classics, introducing new works is central to the Choir's mission, and recent seasons have seen numerous commissioned works added to the body of choral repertoire. The Choir is led by Eric Stark, who begins his ninth season as Artistic Director.

In Brief:

ISO performs world premiere of pianist and composer Stephen Hough's *Missa Mirabilis* for orchestra and chorus on Easter weekend; Hough plays Mendelssohn Piano Concerto No. 1 as soloist.

Performers: Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra

Conductors: Nicholas McGegan
Artists: Stephen Hough, Piano
Indianapolis Symphonic Choir
Location: Hilbert Circle Theatre
Dates & Times: Fri. & Sat., Apr. 6 & 7, at 8 p.m.
Repertoire:
HAYDN Symphony No. 30 in C Major, ("Alleluia")
STEPHEN HOUGH *Missa Mirabilis* (World Premiere)
BRAHMS *Gesang der Parzen* ("Song of the Fates"), Op. 89
MENDELSSOHN Piano Concerto No. 1 in G Minor, Op. 25

Tickets: \$20-\$75; (317) 639-4300; Toll Free (800) 366-8457; online at www.IndianapolisSymphony.org
Performance at DePauw University: free and open to the public.

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