

PRESS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Date: 30 August 2019

Music Director Jaap van Zweden and the HK Phil Open the 2019/20 Season with Major Romantic Works by Rachmaninov, Mahler and more
Featuring top soloists Korean pianist Seong-Jin Cho and German baritone Stephen Genz

JAAP!: Season Opening: JAAP | Seong-Jin Cho (6 & 7 September)
JAAP!: JAAP | Symphonie Fantastique (13 & 14 September)

[30 August 2019, Hong Kong] The Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra (HK Phil)'s new season gets underway with a powerful pair of concerts led by Music Director [Jaap van Zweden](#). Each concert features the type of full-bodied Romantic works that have led this orchestra, under Jaap's baton, to international recognition. Joining hands with the orchestra for this two-week gala are First Prize winner of the Chopin International Competition, Korean pianist [Seong-Jin Cho](#); and Gramophone Classical Music Award's Solo Vocal award winner, German baritone [Stephen Genz](#).

Season Opening: JAAP | Seong-Jin Cho (6 & 7 September) features Rachmaninov's thrilling Piano Concerto no. 2, a perennial audience favourite that is sure to be especially electrifying in the hands of Korean phenom [Seong-Jin Cho](#).

"...this (2015) Chopin Competition winner [Seong-Jin Cho] can stand proud next to the likes of such illustrious past winners as Pollini, Argerich and Zimerman"
--- Pianist

The concert opens with the Prelude to Act 1 of *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* by Wagner—a composer now nearly synonymous with the HK Phil following Jaap's triumphant four-year performance and recording project of Wagner's Ring Cycle, which won the HK Phil a *Gramophone* nomination for 2019 Orchestra of the Year.

The programme will conclude with selections from Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet*, the dramatic ballet score the composer intended to reach "the hearts of all listeners" on its own merits regardless of dance and theatrical elements.

Title Sponsor of Opening Night Concert on 6 September 2019: United Overseas Bank

The second week of these opening concerts, **JAAP | Symphonie Fantastique (13 & 14 September)** reflects the height of Romanticism with works by Brahms, Mahler and Berlioz. The concert begins with Brahms' elegant and joyful Variations on a Theme by Joseph Haydn—although not actually based on a theme by Haydn, unbeknownst to Brahms.

This is followed by two autobiographical musical works defined by unrequited love—Mahler's *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen* (Songs of a Wayfarer) and Berlioz' *Symphonie fantastique*. Mahler's song cycle was written in the wake of his unhappy love for a famous soprano. The piece has four movements based on lyrics by Mahler himself and follows a path of grief, joy, despair and solace. Internationally recognised German baritone [Stephen Genz](#), known for his excellence in lied repertoire, will sing the highly expressive texts with "moving artistry and great intensity".

Closing the programme is Berlioz' Episode de la vie d'un artiste (An Episode in the Life of an Artist), best known as *Symphonie fantastique*. The five movements of this "Fantastical Symphony" each depict a dreamlike, opium-induced episode in an artist's life (likely Berlioz's) who is driven mad by failed love. The piece was inspired by Berlioz's ill-fated passion for the Irish-born actress Harriet Smithson. The work is grand, progressive and wild.

JAAP!: Season Opening: JAAP | Seong-Jin Cho will be held on **6 & 7 September (Fri & Sat), 8PM** in the **Hong Kong Cultural Centre Concert Hall**. Tickets are \$1,280, \$880, \$580 and \$380 and are available at [URBTIX](#).

JAAP!: JAAP | Symphonie Fantastique will be held on **13 & 14 September (Fri & Sat), 8PM** in the **Hong Kong Cultural Centre Concert Hall**. Tickets are \$580, \$480, \$380 and \$280 and are available at [URBTIX](#).

For enquiries, please call +852 2721 2332 or visit hkphil.org.

Artists (JAAP!: Season Opening: JAAP | Seong-Jin Cho)

Jaap van Zweden, conductor [\[full biography\]](#)

Over the past decade, conductor Jaap van Zweden has become an international presence on three continents. Currently Music Director of the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra, he is also Music Director of the New York Philharmonic – a post he has held since the 2018/19 season. Guest engagements this season include the Chicago Symphony, Cleveland Orchestra, Netherlands Radio Philharmonic, Shanghai Symphony and Amsterdam’s Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra.

Seong-Jin Cho, piano [\[full biography\]](#)

Seong-Jin Cho is considered one of the most distinctive artists of his generation. He won First Prize at the Chopin International Competition in Warsaw in 2015. The following year he signed an exclusive contract with Deutsche Grammophon. The first recording was released in November 2016 featuring Chopin’s First Concerto with the London Symphony Orchestra and Gianandrea Noseda and the Four Ballades. A solo Debussy album was released in November 2017 followed in 2018 by a Mozart album featuring Sonatas and the D minor Concerto with the Chamber Orchestra of Europe and Yannick Nézet-Séguin.

Artists (JAAP!: JAAP | Symphonie Fantastique)

Jaap van Zweden, conductor [\[full biography\]](#)

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Stephan Genz, baritone [\[full biography\]](#)

Born in Erfurt, Germany, Stephan Genz is an internationally recognised baritone known particularly for his excellence in the Lied repertory. After receiving his first musical training as a chorister in the Thomanerchor in Leipzig, he pursued his vocal studies with Hans-Joachim Beyer at the Leipzig Conservatory, and with Mitsuko Shirai and Hartmut Höll at the Karlsruhe Conservatory. He later studied with Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau and Elisabeth Schwarzkopf. He came to prominence after winning the International Johannes Brahms Competition in Hamburg (1994) and the International Hugo Wolf Competition in Stuttgart (1994). In 1998 he was awarded the “Brahms-Prize” of Schleswig-Holstein, and in 2000 the Belgium music critics elected him “Young Artist of the Year”.

JAAP!: SEASON OPENING: JAAP | SEONG-JIN CHO

6 & 7 | 9 | 2019

FRI & SAT 8PM

Hong Kong Cultural Centre Concert Hall

HK\$1280 \$880 \$580 \$380

Tickets are now available at URBTIX.

For ages 6 and above

Title Sponsor of Opening Night Concert on 6 September: United Overseas Bank



Artists

[Jaap van Zweden](#)

conductor

[Seong-Jin Cho](#)

piano

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



Jaap van Zweden

Photo Credit: Cheung Chi-wai/HK Phil



Seong-Jin Cho

Photo Credit: Harald Hoffmann / DG



Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra

Photo Credit: Eric Hong/HK Phil

Programme

WAGNER

Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg: Prelude to Act I

RACHMANINOV

Piano Concerto no. 2

PROKOFIEV

Selections from *Romeo & Juliet*

JAAP!: JAAP | SYMPHONIE FANTASTIQUE

13 & 14 | 9 | 2019

FRI & SAT 8PM

Hong Kong Cultural Centre Concert Hall

HK \$580 \$480 \$380 \$280

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[Jaap van Zweden](#)

conductor

[Stephan Genz](#)

baritone

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Jaap van Zweden

Photo Credit: Wong Kin-chung/HK Phil



Stephan Genz

Photo Credit: stephan-genz.com



Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra

Photo Credit: Cheung Wai-lok/HK Phil

Programme

BRAHMS

Variations on a Theme by Joseph Haydn

MAHLER

Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen (Songs of a Wayfarer)

BERLIOZ

Symphonie fantastique

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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. Recently the HK Phil has been nominated for the prestigious UK classical music magazine *Gramophone's* 2019 Orchestra of the Year Award – the first orchestra in Asia to receive this nomination.

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 Music Director Jaap van Zweden, the HK Phil has attained new heights of artistic excellence, garnering international critical acclaim.

Following on from the success of the European tour which included a filmed concert from Vienna's Musikverein, the HK Phil has toured extensively across the Mainland China. In 2017, in celebration of the 20th anniversary of the establishment of the HKSAR, and with support of the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Offices, the orchestra performed in Seoul, Osaka, Singapore, Melbourne and at the Sydney Opera House.

Jaap, the HK Phil, a superb cast of soloists and a chorus successfully completed an epic four-year journey through Wagner's "Ring Cycle" in January 2018. The concert performances and live Naxos recordings have been enthusiastically received by audiences and praised by critics at home and abroad. The recording of *Götterdämmerung* was released in November 2018.

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, each conducting their own compositions. Its acclaimed education and community engagement programmes in schools, hospital and outdoor space, 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 and stimulate cultural participation in Hong Kong, and to enhance Hong Kong's reputation as one of the great cities in the world.

Thanks to a significant subsidy from the Hong Kong Government and long-term funding from Principal Patron Swire, the Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust and other supporters, the HK Phil now boasts a full-time 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.

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 Venue Partner of the Hong Kong Cultural Centre.
SWIRE is the Principal Patron of the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra.