

Toronto **Symphony** Orchestra

Peter Oundjian, Music Director

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Media Release

THE GREAT GERGIEV CONDUCTS! Valery Gergiev, conductor / Alexander Toradze, piano February 14 & 15, 8 pm / Roy Thomson Hall

Toronto, Ontario -- Valery Gergiev, the fiery Artistic Director of the Mariinsky Theatre in St. Petersburg, Russian, and Principal Conductor designate of the London Symphony Orchestra from 2007, brings his electrifying style and presence to the TSO. He has chosen a magnificent programme of early 20th century blockbusters. In his hands, **Debussy's *Prelude a l'apres-midi d'un faune*** starts the concerts; **Debussy's** flashing waves and sensuous mythological landscape glow more brightly than ever, and **Stravinsky's** witty, neo-Classical piano works – **Concerto for Piano and Winds**, plus the **Capriccio for Piano and Orchestra** that features the brilliant **Alexander Toradze**.

“Gergiev doesn't know what it is to hold back,” believes his regular collaborator, the film producer Brian Large. “He lives life on the line and no matter how hard he pushes others, he pushes himself further.” Joseph Volpe of New York's Metropolitan Opera says affectionately of him, “He's a crazy man.” Shortly before conductor Ilya Musin's death, the great Russian mentor recalled, “Of all my students, he is the most hot-blooded and energetic – I worry about him.” Born to Ossetian parents in Moscow in 1953 and raised in the Caucasus, Valery Gergiev studied music at the Leningrad Conservatory under Maestro Musin. He was elected Artistic Director of the Mariinsky Opera Company in 1988 at the age of 35, and in 1996 the Russian government gave him complete control over the orchestra, opera, and ballet. His mission has been to make the Mariinsky companies the best in the world. An international support network has been created, with Gergiev directly involved. The network ensures the international profile of the Mariinsky is maintained; corporate sponsorship is raised; new instruments and equipment are bought; to create educational exchanges, and that touring productions are sponsored. Fundraising galas take place in the UK, the US, Finland, Japan, and here in Canada. Among Gergiev's greatest achievements are the rejuvenation and expansion of the Kirov's repertoire, in both Russian and European music. He has brought important operas by Mussorgsky, Tchaikovsky, Rimsky-Korsakov and Prokofiev, and ballets by Stravinsky to the theatre, and revived neglected Western works, such as Wagner's *Parsifal* and The Ring Cycle, or those written originally for St. Petersburg, such as Verdi's *La forza del destino*.

Gergiev is driven by seemingly endless energy to fulfil his vision of creating a world-class company at the Kirov. Just as he has his supporters in the journey, so those who have fallen by the wayside have dubbed him a dictator – an image repeated by the press over the years. Gergiev admits he pushes his artists hard but is unrepentant. “The press always write that I'm like a Tsar – but I don't care. I don't really insult people, I don't throw them out of the building. It's just that my response to situations is I'd prefer to see the production and the company being strong and successful to reading in the press how soft I am on a singer or designer. I believe in the press – I just don't follow them. I have my own judgements, and without them, I'd be totally lost. It's the way I am, and will carry on, unless I see my orchestra doesn't want me to continue. Then, perhaps, I'll question if there's something wrong with me. Democracy is not a good thing when it comes to music,” he told the writer John Ardoin. “When everybody is right, nobody is right. You cannot vote for the right dynamics or the right tempo.” Gergiev's personal ambitions? “I want to be a better conductor, to work with better artists, and enjoy the music more.” And his final thought: “Everyone writes that I never sleep. Well, in future I will sleep as much as I ever do!”

For information on Alexander Toadze, please visit www.toradzepianostudio.org.

This concert is being recorded by CBC Radio 2 for broadcast.

Tickets: Call the Roy Thomson Hall box office at 416 593 4828. \$117, \$88, \$80.50, \$70, \$61, \$44.50, \$35.50, \$30.
Mon-Fri, 9-8. Sat, 12-5. Sun, 3 hrs prior to concert start. Purchase online: www.tso.ca VISA/MC/AMEX.

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