

PRESS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Date: 31 December 2019

Hailed as the 2019 *Gramophone* Orchestra of the Year, the HK Phil and its Music Director Jaap van Zweden to Tour Japan and Korea in March 2020

[31 December 2019, Hong Kong] Following the great success of their five-city tour in 2017 to Seoul, Osaka, Singapore, Melbourne and Sydney and recent performances in the Mainland China, cities such as Zhuhai, Guangzhou, Foshan and Shanghai, the **Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra (HK Phil)** and its **Music Director [Jaap van Zweden](#)** will embark on a six-concert tour to Japan and Korea in March 2020. The tour begins in Japan's [Osaka Symphony Hall \(5 March 2020\)](#) followed by [Tokyo Suntory Hall \(7 March 2020\)](#); and then four performances in Korea's [Deajeon Arts Center \(10 March 2020\)](#), [Seoul Arts Center \(11 March 2020\)](#), [Chuncheon Culture Center \(12 March 2020\)](#) and [Gwangju Culture & Art Center \(13 March 2020\)](#).

The HK Phil is honoured to return, under the baton of Music Director Jaap van Zweden, to Osaka Symphony Hall as well as Seoul Arts Center, and is excited to perform, for the very first time with Maestro van Zweden, at the Suntory Hall in Tokyo and three cities in Korea – Deajeon, Chuncheon and Gwangju.

The orchestra will present two programmes during the tour. The first in Japan (Osaka and Tokyo) includes Tchaikovsky's *Variations on a Rococo Theme* with talented Japanese cellist Haruma Sato, Wagner's Prelude to Act I of *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, and Beethoven's Symphony no. 5. The second programme for the four performances in Korea will feature two great symphonies – Beethoven's Symphony no. 5 and Prokofiev's Symphony no. 5.

Recently, the HK Phil was presented with the 2019 *Gramophone* Orchestra of the Year Award for the HK Phil's live recordings of the complete *Ring Cycle* by Richard Wagner on the Naxos label. These live recordings have just been selected as one of the ["Critics' Choice 2019"](#) by *Gramophone* Magazine. The orchestra hosted two celebration concerts on 8 and 9 November, to share the joy with and extend its heartfelt gratitude to its valuable supporters, including the Hong Kong SAR Government, Principal Patron the Swire Group, and music-lovers in Hong Kong and around the world.

"With this international recognition, and as the cultural ambassador of Hong Kong, we, the HK Phil, bear the great responsibility to go international, to share our finest music-making with a wider audience around the world. The orchestra and I especially look forward to presenting our internationally acclaimed sound to audiences in Tokyo and three cities in Korea – Deajeon, Chuncheon and Gwangju - for the first time", Maestro Jaap van Zweden said.

Mr Lau Kong-wah, Secretary for Home Affairs, stated, "We are all proud of this marvellous achievement. The HK Phil has made history in being the first orchestra in Asia to receive an award from *Gramophone*. The award is certainly an encouragement to the HK Phil, and it will also inspire other local artists and arts groups to excel. I am sure that the HK Phil will continue to scale new heights in the years to come!"

Mr Y. S. Liu, Chairman of the Board of Governors of the Hong Kong Philharmonic Society, said, "We are very proud to have received this prestigious honour. Being a leading orchestra in Asia, it has been a humble wish for the HK Phil to look for a permanent home venue with a concert hall with top-notch acoustic built-in, so that the orchestra can maintain a sustainable growth in its overall operation, audience and business development over a long-term as a leading orchestra in the region. We hope we can be a resident orchestra in the West Kowloon Cultural District in order to fulfil this lofty ambition. We will continue striving for the artistic excellence, locally, nationally and internationally."

The tour to Japan and Korea is financially supported by the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office (Tokyo). Cathay Pacific is our Airline Partner.

Click the below image to watch the video of the HK Phil's Celebrations of the 2019 *Gramophone* Orchestra of the Year:



Click [HERE](#) to download photos of the HK Phil's Celebrations of the 2019 Gramophone Orchestra of the Year. Photo credit: please refer to the file names.

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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. 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.