

PRESS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
26 January 2018

The HK Phil's *Ring* Ends With A Glorious Finale



A perfect finale

Photo credit: Ka Lam/HK Phil

[26 January 2018, Hong Kong] With the last note of Brünnhilde's Immolation Scene, the **Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra** (HK Phil) reached the conclusion of its 4-year epic journey through Wagner's *Ring* Cycle. The HK Phil is proud to announce the completion of these first-ever performances in Hong Kong, recorded for enjoyment and posterity by Naxos. This awe-inspiring project would never be possible without the HKSAR Government's generous support in granting the HK Phil the contestable funding for four consecutive years. In fact, the HKSAR Government not only supported this financially, but also in person, and it was a great honour to have Ms Michelle Li, Director of Leisure and Cultural Services (LCSD), and other senior members of the Home Affairs Bureau and the LCSD joining on 18th January to celebrate the end of this vast masterpiece.

This monumental work was directed by the HK Phil's Music Director Jaap van Zweden who was joined by dozens of world-renowned Wagnerian singers and three choruses. Altogether the orchestra gave eight performances of the Cycle's four parts, being two performances of each opera *Das Rheingold*, *Die Walküre*, *Siegfried* and *Götterdämmerung*, with a total audience numbering almost 13,000. This venture also attracted over a hundred members of the media, and numerous highly complimentary reviews were generated.

Critical Acclaim for the HK Phil's *Ring* Cycle

"A Ring from Hong Kong to take on the world."

--- Hugo Shirley, *Gramophone*

"...riveting performance" (translated from German)

--- *Das Opernglas*

“The most remarkable element of the performances was the high standard of the orchestral playing, astonishing for a band that had never tackled Wagner’s dramas in sound before.”

--- Hugh Canning, *The Sunday Times*

“Triumph for orchestra and singers alike”

--- Alexis Alrich, *South China Morning Post*

“Successfully performing Siegfried, the third and least accessible opera of Richard Wagner’s Ring Cycle, cemented the growing reputation of the Hong Kong Philharmonic for this demanding material.”

--- Philip Eisenbeiss, *Interlude*

“It is difficult to believe that the Hong Kong Philharmonic is playing the “Ring” for the first time. Under van Zweden, the orchestra sounds as if it had this music in its blood.”

--- Robert Markow, *Der Neue Merker*

“Jaap van Zweden: Lord of the Hong Kong Ring.”

--- Jo Litson, *Limelight*

“Götterdämmerung was his [Jaap van Zweden] crowning glory and, by most measures, a phenomenal success.”

--- Alan Yu, *bachtrack*

To extend the enjoyment of this Wagnerian epic beyond the concert hall, the HK Phil organised fringe activities every year including symposia, open rehearsals, pre-concert talks, ensemble performances, demonstrations of Wagnerian musical instruments, a creative art competition, workshops, exhibitions, vocal masterclasses, podcasts, a story-telling session, and movie screening sessions, all of which attracted thousands of members of the public.

Though the *Ring* concerts have been completed, the HK Phil continues with the mission to nurture local talents. A composition workshop for emerging composers has been organised with the music of Wagner’s *Ring Cycle* as the starting point. Six selected composers will have their new orchestral works presented at a public workshop with the HK Phil in March 2018.

The HK Phil would like to take this opportunity to thank our wonderful partners, including the Hong Kong Cultural Centre, the Goethe-Institut Hongkong, Swire, Chow Sang Sang, Naxos, The New York Times, the *Ring* Circle Members (including Mimi & KH Chan, Foundation for the Arts and Music in Asia, interlude.hk, Marga Group, Ko Shing 11 and J. Rotbart & Co.), all the patrons and members of the audience for their generous support. It is only with your support that this *Ring* could have been materialised.



Ms. Michelle Li, Director of Leisure and Cultural Services, with Board Members of the Hong Kong Philharmonic Society and Management of the HK Phil.

Photo credit: wailok/HK Phil



Showcasing the *Ring*

Photo credit: Wailok/HK Phil



Mr. Michael MacLeod, Chief Executive of the HK Phil, gives a guided tour to a group of overseas journalists invited by the Information Services Department, HKSAR Government.



Demonstration of Wagnerian Instruments
Photo credit: wailok/HK Phil



Ms. Sue Elliott, Wagner expert
Photo credit: wailok/HK Phil



Poet Uncle Hung telling the stories of the gods
Photo credit: wailok/HK Phil



Open rehearsal of *Götterdämmerung*
Photo credit: wailok/HK Phil

--- END ---

For further press information please contact:

Meggy Cheng, Director of Marketing

Tel: +852 2721 9035 Email: meggy.cheng@hkphil.org

Chiu Yee Ling, Marketing Manager

Tel: +852 2721 1483 Email: chiuyeeling@hkphil.org

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.

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 2022. Maestro van Zweden will be the next Music Director of the New York Philharmonic from the 2018/19 season.

Yu Long was appointed Principal Guest Conductor with the HK Phil for a three-year period commencing with 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 within the mainland China. 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 in 2017.

Maestro Jaap van Zweden, the HK Phil, and a superb casts of soloists, have presented concert performances of Richard Wagner's entire *Ring* cycle. These have been enthusiastically endorsed by both audiences and critics at home and abroad, and in recognition of their quality, the orchestra and Jaap were invited to perform Wagner's *Die Walküre* in staged performances at the Beijing Music Festival last October in a co-production with the Salzburg Easter Festival.

Conductors and soloists who have recently performed with the orchestra include Vladimir Ashkenazy, Charles Dutoit, Christoph Eschenbach, Matthias Goerne, Stephen Hough, Lang Lang, Yo-Yo Ma, Ning Feng 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 of 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 and the Hong Kong Arts Festival.

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 registered 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