

Wednesday 20 August 2008

Embargoed until 10pm Wednesday 20 August 2008



**Sir Charles Mackerras is the new Honorary President of Edinburgh International Festival Society.**

Tonight, Wednesday 20 August, at the Usher Hall, Festival Director Jonathan Mills will thank Sir Charles Mackerras for the wonderful performances he has brought Festival audiences over 56 years and announce his appointment as the Honorary President of the Edinburgh International Festival Society.

Mackerras is only the second person to be invited to become Honorary President of the Edinburgh International Festival Society, the first, Yehudi Menuhin held the post from 1989 until his death in 1999.

Sir Charles Mackerras has gifted Edinburgh audiences with some of the most acclaimed Festival performances in its 62 year history, and the depth of his commitment made him a natural choice to take on the role of Honorary President.

Sir Charles' first appearance at the Edinburgh International Festival was in 1952 at the Empire Theatre (now the Edinburgh Festival Theatre) with Sadler's Wells Theatre Ballet, conducting his own arrangement of Arthur Sullivan's *Pineapple Poll*. He returned in 1958 as Music Director for a season of 12 ballet premieres. In more recent years he is renowned for his performances at the Usher Hall with orchestras including the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, the Hanover Band, the Royal Scottish National Orchestra, the Philharmonia Orchestra, and the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra. Soloists who have shared the Festival platform with Mackerras include Christian Zacharias, Felicity Lott, Sarah Walker, Philip Langridge,

John Williams, Bryn Terfel, Ian Bostridge, Lisa Milne and Simon Keenlyside. In 2006 Mackerras conducted the seminal series of Beethoven's Nine Symphonies.

One of the most prized relationships which has developed over Sir Charles' 56 years at the Festival is his partnership with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra. Tonight that relationship is celebrated, with another Festival favourite Alfred Brendel, in a sell-out performance of two of Mozart's late masterpieces and two of Dvořák's rich, romantic Bohemian gems.

Jonathan Mills, Festival Director said: "Sir Charles Mackerras has brought to Edinburgh and its audiences a wealth of wonderful performances. To honour his commitment and his wonderful artistry the Festival is very proud to announce Sir Charles Mackerras as its Honorary President, and we are delighted that he has accepted this position. I am sure that tonight's performance will add to the already rich memories people have of his performances at the Edinburgh International Festival and we look forward to a continuing and developing relationship with Sir Charles."

Sir Charles Mackerras, Honorary President of the Edinburgh International Festival Society said: "I am absolutely delighted to be named as Honorary President of the Edinburgh International Festival Society.

As a genuine Scotsman, it is a great honour to be given this position and to follow on in such distinguished footsteps.

Since my debut at the Festival in 1952 it has always played a very important part of my musical life and to have a continuing relationship with the Festival is a great honour indeed."

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