



**\*\* FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE THURSDAY 16th JULY \*\***

## **Orchestral world mourns death of celebrated conductor**

### **Sir Charles Mackerras**

The orchestral world today expressed its sadness at the death of Sir Charles Mackerras – one of the most celebrated conductors of his time.

During his illustrious career he worked with many British orchestras including the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, Philharmonia Orchestra, Welsh National Opera and the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra.

Sir Charles was also a recipient of the ABO Award in 2001, presented annually to the individual or institution considered by ABO members to have made the most important contribution to the orchestral life of the UK.

**Mark Pemberton, Director of the Association of British Orchestras, said:**

“We were so saddened to hear about the death of Sir Charles Mackerras, who worked with so many British orchestras over his long and distinguished career. And it was in recognition of his importance to the orchestral sector and the affection in which he was held that he was awarded the ABO Award in 2001.

“The ABO Award is unique among the many prestigious awards and prizes in the music world because its recipient is nominated by the member orchestras themselves. British orchestras and opera houses have without doubt lost one of their most popular conductors, and he will be much missed by the musicians and managers alike.”

**Chi-chi Nwanoku, MBE, principal double-bassist at the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, said:**

“I am deeply saddened by the death of Sir Charles Mackerras, a world class conductor, personal hero and dear friend. Ever since he began working with the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment in 1987, I recognised a kindred spirit -committed to creating the most beautiful music audible to the human ear.

The fondest memory I have of Sir Charles was when he conducted Haydn's *Creation*. Simply put, it was the most sublime rendition I have ever heard. His work was a loving and painstaking search for the quality of every note.

Sir Charles was unique and had a magical, innate way of bringing music to life not just aurally but visually- taking players and audiences along with him.

The classical music industry and, indeed the world have lost a true master of his craft."

**Stephen Carpenter, Chief Executive of the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment commented:**

"It is difficult to think that such a vibrant musical personality is no longer with us. Any concert or opera performance conducted by Sir Charles was an event that every musician in the OAE looked forward to and enjoyed. The OAE players, board and management staff had the highest respect and love for Sir Charles and we are grateful for the many happy musical memories that he gave to us and to audiences throughout the world; memories that will thankfully live on through his extensive recorded legacy."

**Andrew Cornall, Executive Director of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic (Artistic Policy – Orchestra & Ensembles) commented:**

"Sir Charles Mackerras was one of Britain's best known and best loved conductors, and one of the most important musicians of our day. He enjoyed a longstanding association with Liverpool Phil and made a major contribution to our musical life, both on the concert platform and through the many recordings we made together, of which the Beethoven complete symphonies on EMI are still regarded as outstanding interpretations of these works. We were very much looking forward to Sir Charles returning to Liverpool to conduct the Orchestra in November and we all offer our deepest condolences to Lady Mackerras and Sir Charles's family."

**Ends.**

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### **Biography - Sir Charles Mackerras**

Born in 1925 of Australian parents in America, Sir Charles Mackerras studied in Sydney and Prague and made his debut as an opera conductor at Sadler's Wells. He was First Conductor of the Hamburg Opera (1966-69) and Musical Director of both Sadler's Wells (later English National Opera) (1970-77), and of Welsh National Opera (1987-92), where his notable Janacek productions, amongst many others, were acclaimed. From 1982-85 Sir Charles was Chief Conductor of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra and also conducted the opening public concert at the Sydney Opera House. Sir Charles is Conductor Laureate of the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, Conductor Emeritus of the OAE, Conductor Laureate of the Brno Philharmonic Orchestra, Principal Guest Conductor of the Philharmonia Orchestra, Conductor Emeritus of the Welsh National Opera and Principal Guest Conductor Emeritus of the San Francisco Opera. A specialist in Czech repertory, Sir Charles was Principal Guest Conductor of the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra from 1997 - 2003, following his life-long association with both the Orchestra and many aspects of Czech musical life.

Sir Charles has undertaken much research into performance practice of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. One of the highlights of the 1991 season was the re-opening of the Estates Theatre in Prague, scene of the original premiere of 'Don Giovanni'. Sir Charles conducted a new production of that opera to mark the bi-centenary of Mozart's death. He has recorded all Mozart's Symphonies and Serenades with the Prague Chamber Orchestra. With the Scottish Chamber Orchestra he has recorded seven Mozart operas, most recently 'La Clemenza di Tito' following a performance at the 2005 Edinburgh International Festival. [2002 marked Sir Charles' 50th year with the Edinburgh Festival, in which he conducted Donizetti's 'Maria Stuarda', Handel's 'Jephtha' and Mozart's 'Gran Partita'.] He was recently named Honorary President of the Edinburgh International Festival Society.

His vast discography includes an award-winning cycle of Janacek operas with the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, Britten's 'Gloriana' with WNO [awarded 'Gramophone' magazine's Best Opera Recording for 1994] and Dvorak's 'Rusalka' with the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra [awarded 'Gramophone' magazine's 'Best Opera Recording' and 'Best Recording of the Year', the 'Preis der Deutschen Schallplattenkritik', 'Prix Caecilia' and 'Edison Award' for 1999]. Notable are his recordings with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra of Beethoven's and Mahler's symphonies and Brahms' four symphonies with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra. Sir Charles and the Scottish Chamber Orchestra have recorded eight Mozart concertos with Alfred Brendel. Sir Charles has recorded much Czech music with the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra, including Dvorak's 'Slavonic Dances', Smetana's 'Ma Vlast', Martinu's 'Field Mass' and 'Double Concerto' and Janacek's 'Kat'a Kabanova', 'Sarka' and the 'Glagolitic Mass' all for Supraphon. For Chandos records he has recorded 'The Magic Flute', 'The Makropoulos Case', 'Cosi Fan Tutte' and 'Hansel and Gretel', which won the 2008 Grammy Award for Best Opera Recording. He has recorded the complete Beethoven symphonies for Hyperion Records.

Sir Charles made his debut with the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden in 1964, where he has since conducted 34 operas, including 'Un Ballo in Maschera' which celebrated his 50th anniversary and 80th birthday in 2005. He also recently conducted 'Katya Kabanova' there, an opera that he first introduced London audiences to in 1951 at the Sadler's Wells theatre; the first performance of a Janacek opera in the United Kingdom. In addition to his many appearances with the San Francisco Opera, he has a long association with the Metropolitan Opera, New York. He made his debut at the Salzburg Festival, with the Vienna Philharmonic, conducting 'Le Nozze di Figaro' in 1998, and returned to Salzburg to conduct the orchestra in a programme of Schubert and Mozart in 2005. He made his debut with the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra in 2004, in which year he also made his debut at the National Theatre Prague, conducting Janacek's 'Vylety pana broucka' (The Excursions of Mr Broucek).

In the 2009/10 season he conducts the Philharmonia Orchestra, the Scottish Chamber Orchestra and the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment. For English National Opera he conducts 'The Turn of the Screw', for the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, he conducts 'The Cunning Little Vixen' and for Glyndebourne Festival Opera he conducts 'Cosi fan tutte'.

Sir Charles received a CBE in 1974 and was knighted in 1979. He was honoured with the Medal of Merit from the Czech Republic in 1996, made a Companion of the Order of Australia in 1997 and made a Companion of Honour in the 2003 Queen's Birthday Honours. In May 2005 he was presented with the

Royal Philharmonic Society Gold Medal and in November 2005 was the first recipient of the Queen's Medal for Music. [He is a DMus (Hon) of the Universities of Hull, York, Nottingham, Griffith (Australia), Oxford, Napier, Melbourne, Sydney, the Janacek Academy of Music (Brno) and the Prague Academy of Music. Sir Charles is also President of Trinity College of Music. ]