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OAKLAND SYMPHONY OPENS 2015-2016 SEASON WITH A NEW NAME, A PREMIERE BY MASON BATES PLUS KENNETH RENSHAW PERFORMING PROKOFIEV VIOLIN CONCERTO NO. 2 PLUS SYMPHONIC WORKS BY BRAHMS AND RACHMANINOFF

OCTOBER 2 AT THE PARAMOUNT THEATRE

Oakland, CA, August 13, 2015 – The Oakland Symphony opens its 22nd season with a new name and a West Coast premiere by Bay Area composer Mason Bates Friday, October 2, at 8 pm at the Paramount Theatre in Oakland. The program, with Music Director and conductor Michael Morgan on the podium, includes the Bates's *Devil's Radio*, Prokofiev's Violin Concerto No. 2 with guest soloist and young Bay Area artist Kenneth Renshaw, selections from Brahms' *Liebeslieder* Waltzes with the Oakland Symphony Chorus conducted by Lynne Morrow, who celebrates her tenth year with the Chorus, and Rachmaninoff's *Symphonic Dances*. The Oakland Symphony 2015-2016 season is sponsored by the California Arts Council, Art Works, the National Endowment for the Arts, the City of Oakland and the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. The season opening concert is sponsored by Wells Fargo. For more information and tickets, priced \$15-\$75 and on sale August 15, visit www.oaklandsymphony.org .

Two internationally acclaimed local artists--composer Mason Bates, who has worked with the Symphony since early in his career, and Menuhin Competition winner and Crowden School alumnus Kenneth Renshaw--take the stage for what promises to be a sensational season opening. Bates's *Devil's Radio* (2014) swings and grooves from quietly propulsive to shimmering melodic "lures" to a bluesy bassline. Kenneth Renshaw brings a formidable technique and interpretive flair to Prokofiev's virtuoso concerto. Oakland Symphony Chorus Music Director Lynne Morrow celebrates ten years on the podium conducting selections from Brahms's lyrical *Liebeslieder* *Waltzes*. Rachmaninoff's lush *Symphonic Dances* completes the program.

A new name for the Symphony

In June, the Symphony Board of Directors voted to change the name of the orchestra to Oakland Symphony from Oakland East Bay Symphony to more accurately reflect the organization's home base and the community's pride of ownership of one of the country's most recognized regional orchestras. The Oakland Symphony will continue to serve its core community as well as audiences from throughout the Bay Area in its main stage concerts, increasing performances and events in the community and its acclaimed education programs that reach tens of thousands of participants each year.

About the Artists

A recent recipient of the Heinz Award for Arts & Humanities, **Mason Bates** writes music that fuses innovative orchestral writing, imaginative narrative forms, the harmonies of jazz and the rhythms of techno. Frequently performed by orchestras large and small, his symphonic music has been the first to receive widespread acceptance for its expanded palette of electronic sounds, and it is championed by conductors such as Michael Morgan, Riccardo Muti, Michael Tilson Thomas, and Leonard Slatkin. Bates has become a visible advocate for bringing new music to new spaces, whether through institutional partnerships such as his residency with the Chicago Symphony, or through his classical/DJ project Mercury Soul, which has transformed spaces ranging from commercial clubs to Frank Gehry-designed concert halls into exciting, hybrid musical events drawing over a thousand people. In presenting Bates with the Heinz Award, Teresa Heinz remarked that, "his music has moved the orchestra into the digital age and dissolved the boundaries of classical music."

Continuing performances of works such as *Rusty Air in Carolina*, an electro-acoustic tone poem about the ambience of the South, and *Mothership*, which premiered at the Sydney Opera House by the YouTube Symphony to an online audience of 1.8 million, have demonstrated that electronic sounds can be a welcome addition to the orchestral palette with minimal logistics. While Bates often performs the electronica onstage with orchestras, dozens of repeat performances of his symphonic music happen without him. Many purely acoustic works complement his diverse catalogue, such as *Sirens*, an a cappella work recently recorded by the superstar chorus Chanticleer, and *Desert Transport*, which conjures a helicopter trip over the Arizona landscape.

Bringing classical music to new audiences is a central part of Bates' activities as a curator. With composer Anna Clyne, he has transformed the Chicago Symphony's MusicNOW series into an imaginative concert experience drawing huge crowds, with cinematic program notes and immersive stagecraft. Another new take on new music is *Mercury Soul*, which embeds sets of classical music into a fluid evening of

DJing and immersive stagecraft.

About *Devil's Radio*, Mason Bates writes, "'Rumor is the Devil's radio,' goes an evocative Southern phrase, and ever since hearing it, I've fantasized about a fanfare with equal parts darkness and groove. What began life as a brief piano étude quickly swelled way beyond its bounds, and the opportunity to write for a massive orchestra in Sun Valley seemed the perfect chance to give the Devil his due.

"Sometimes the music is coldly propulsive, as at the opening, which uses a kind of sparkling "musical lure" in the upper woodwinds. But this is soon undercut by a bluesy bass line and energetic percussion, ultimately building into a soaring melody that's best described as vainglorious. Indeed, the work has ample brightness to counter its dark corners, and in this way it can be heard as a fanfare our villain might write for himself, complete with a grandiose flourishes and an infectious swing section. But this lightness quickly evaporates in the work's final minutes, when thunderous hits in the low brass suggest a Goliath-sized figure throwing his weight around. He bows out with a wink and nod, ever the gentleman."

A native of San Francisco, 21-year-old violinist **Kenneth Renshaw** has appeared as soloist with orchestras on four continents, including the National Orchestra of Belgium, the Lithuanian National Orchestra, the China Philharmonic, the Jenaer Philharmonie, the Staatskapelle Weimar, and the California Symphony. He has given sold-out recitals at the Menuhin Festival Gstaad and the Mecklenburg-Vorpommern Festspiele, and has performed live on the national radio stations of Germany, Lithuania, Argentina, and the United States. His playing has been hailed as "vivid and eloquent" by the *San Francisco Chronicle* and praised for its "natural and honest sense of communication" by *The Strad* magazine. A Laureate of the 2015 Queen Elisabeth International Violin Competition, Kenneth also won First Prizes in the 2012 Menuhin and the 2010 Spohr International Violin Competitions. He studied with Donald Weilerstein (NEC), Li Lin (San Francisco Conservatory and Juilliard) and Itzhak Perlman (Perlman Music Program and Juilliard). Renshaw is the proud recipient of a Kovner Fellowship at the Juilliard School for studies in 2014-2016.