

media release
Monday 22 May 2017

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



TSO Chief Conductor in major European Opera project

TSO Chief Conductor and Artistic Director Marko Letonja continues to build his stellar reputation as one of the world's leading conductors of opera. Currently in Stockholm, Letonja is undertaking the phenomenal task of conducting Wagner's grandiose musical drama *The Ring* with the Royal Swedish Opera May 24 - 29.

Featuring world-renowned soprano Nina Stemme in the iconic role of Brünnhilde the epic cycle of four works, considered one of the largest and most ambitious projects in the opera canon, spans up to 16 hours and is rarely performed in its entirety. Stemme, and Australian heldentenor Stuart Skelton, appeared with The TSO in 2016 under the baton of Letonja in Hobart in an acclaimed concert performance of Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde*, both singers reprising their roles direct from The Metropolitan Opera in New York in a major cultural coup for Tasmania.

TSO Director Artistic Planning Simon Rogers says of Letonja's landmark engagement with the Royal Swedish Opera, "Conducting Wagner Operas is like a marathon at the best of times, however conducting the *Ring*, especially in this format with all four operas performed consecutively, is like running several marathons in a week. It is enough to test the stamina and concentration of all the artists, particularly the conductor.

"It demonstrates how fortunate we are to have Marko as our Chief Conductor in Tasmania. He works in the very best opera houses in the world and is keen to bring this experience and world class operatic soloists to us on an ongoing basis, such as Nina Stemme and Stuart Skelton last year, and Elena Maximova and Marcelo Puentes this year in *Carmen*," Rogers said.

"During his tenure, it has been Marko's vision to increase the amount of vocal and operatic repertoire being performed by the TSO, which is good for the artistic health of the orchestra and provides variety in our programming. Marko has been enthusiastically embraced by Tasmanian audiences in his time at the TSO, with markedly increased subscription numbers each year."

Recently announced as TSO Principal Guest Conductor, Johannes Fritzsche, whose 3 year appointment begins in 2018, is also poised to appear on the international opera stage when he conducts the Hamburg State Opera's production of Puccini's *Madame Butterfly* this June.

Letonja returns to Tasmania to conduct 'Colours of the East' with the TSO August 4. The TSO performs its program 'The Calming Sea', featuring flautist Alison Mitchell next Saturday, May 27 at 2.30pm in the Federation Concert Hall.

TSO tickets available www.tso.com.au or 1800 001 190.

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