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For immediate release  
**Donald Runnicles: 2007-08 Season Preview**

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## DONALD RUNNICLES: 2007-08 SEASON PREVIEW

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– *Sunday Times*

DONALD RUNNICLES – NEWLY-APPOINTED PRINCIPAL CONDUCTOR OF BBC SCOTTISH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA – OPENS AND CLOSSES THE SAN FRANCISCO OPERA SEASON WITH WAGNER, CONDUCTS HIS FIRST NEW PRODUCTION AT THE METROPOLITAN OPERA – BRITTEN'S *PETER GRIMES*, AND RETURNS TO THE VIENNA STATE OPERA

AS PRINCIPAL GUEST CONDUCTOR OF THE ATLANTA SYMPHONY, MR. RUNNICLES LEADS FOUR PROGRAMS AND RECORDS THE EVOCATIVE THIRD SYMPHONY OF HENRYK GÓRECKI

THE GRAND TETON MUSIC FESTIVAL GREETES HIS RETURN TO WYOMING IN JUNE AND JULY FOR FOUR WEEKS OF GLORIOUS MUSIC-MAKING, IN HIS THIRD SEASON AS MUSIC DIRECTOR – AND EXTENDS HIS TENURE AS MUSIC DIRECTOR THROUGH 2011

**Donald Runnicles**, Music Director and Principal Conductor of the San Francisco Opera since 1992, opened his season there on September 18 with a new production of Wagner's *Tannhäuser*, and closes it with a new production of Wagner's *Rheingold* running throughout June 2008. The *San Francisco Chronicle* wrote of the new *Tannhäuser*, "Music Director Donald Runnicles conducted with the winning blend of momentum and spaciousness that he always brings to Wagner." Following *Tannhäuser*, the Scottish conductor leads three more of the company's eleven productions, and returns to the Metropolitan Opera, where his international career began with Alban Berg's *Lulu* in 1988, for his first new production with the company – Benjamin Britten's compelling tragedy *Peter Grimes*, which opens on February 28, 2008.

Maestro Runnicles has been Principal Guest Conductor of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra since 2001, and returns this season for four different programs. Each season he makes a recording with the ASO for Telarc. This year he will record Henryk

Górecki's haunting Third Symphony, with soprano Christine Brewer. She sang Isolde in Mr. Runnicles's recent recording of Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*, and Brünnhilde in the ecstatically-received performance of *Götterdämmerung* that he conducted at London's BBC Proms last summer.

Four years ago, Maestro Runnicles made a spectacular debut with the Berlin Philharmonic, conducting Benjamin Britten's *War Requiem*, and he distinguished himself with the orchestra last season as well. Now Mr. Runnicles has chosen another highly-charged *Requiem*, this time by Berlioz, to perform three times in May in the German capital. The work calls for divided choruses and a clarion-voiced tenor – in this case the crack Atlanta Symphony Orchestra Chorus and rising star Joseph Kaiser, who sings at the Met this season, in Gounod's *Roméo et Juliette*, opposite Anna Netrebko, and in Mozart's *Magic Flute*.

A regular guest at the Vienna State Opera, where he appears each season, Donald Runnicles conducts both Wagner's *Flying Dutchman* and Strauss's *Rosenkavalier* there in April 2008. He finished the San Francisco Opera season last June with *Rosenkavalier*, and he and his Octavian – mezzo Joyce DiDonato, in her first outing in the role – won widespread praise. The *Chronicle* stated "The entire performance gained even more vigor and point from the ministrations of Music Director Donald Runnicles, who coaxed both thunderous and delicate playing from the Opera Orchestra," while the *Contra Costa Times* applauded "a stunningly vibrant performance by the orchestra under Music Director Donald Runnicles."

Mr. Runnicles enjoyed an overwhelming success with his BBC Proms performance of *Götterdämmerung*, earning raves from five major London newspapers. The *Times* wrote:

The final *Twilight of the Gods* could not have been recreated with a more powerful sense of proportion and sensitivity of pacing than under the baton of Donald Runnicles...[whose] fine ear for texture and balance drew every shimmer of sunlight, every cross-current in the waters of the Rhine from the vast body of woodwind and divided strings.

The *Sunday Times* declared: "Runnicles is clearly among the most insightful, potent Wagnerians of our day: his account was of spectacular brilliance and high, churning intensity." The *Daily Telegraph* stated: "The real heart of this overwhelming performance was the BBC Symphony Orchestra, which played with heart-stopping intensity and focus under Donald Runnicles."

And the *Financial Times* asserted:

Runnicles' strength in Wagner is his ability to make everything sound natural, but here he pushed out the boundaries – Siegfried set out on his Rhine journey as if he was traveling by rocket; the funeral march was shattering in its sonic grandeur. I have never heard the BBC Symphony Orchestra play better.

Likewise, the *Guardian* affirmed:

Donald Runnicles conducted the BBC Symphony Orchestra, and Christine Brewer sang Brünnhilde for the first time in London. Both were phenomenal.... There was a strong sense throughout of a world hurtling towards both physical destruction and metaphysical liberation. A violent lyricism underscored the playing, which was consistently superb.

For the last 15 years, Donald Runnicles has enjoyed a spectacular run as Music Director of San Francisco Opera, during which the company's international stature has grown each season. He has conducted more than 60 productions, including the 1990 Wagner *Ring* cycle that marked his debut. Another *Ring* begins at the end of this season, in a co-production with the Washington National Opera, directed by Francesca Zambello. Mr. Runnicles will conduct six performances of *Das Rheingold* between June 3 and June 28, with American baritone Mark Delavan starring as Wotan. Mr. Runnicles spends the first few months of the season in San Francisco, where his first production is a new one by Graham Vick: Wagner's *Tannhäuser*, starring Peter Seiffert in his SFO debut. Mr. Runnicles leads six performances between September 18 and October 12. Next on his docket will be a new family-oriented production of Mozart's *Magic Flute*, which Maestro Runnicles conducts eight times between October 13 and November 3. Then a new production of the sardonic Stravinsky/Auden/Kallman morality-tale, *The Rake's Progress*, opens on November 23, with Robert Lepage directing and Maestro Runnicles leading six performances through December 9. And he conducts three performances of Puccini's tragic *Madama Butterfly* during the same period.

The new year finds Donald Runnicles conducting the Atlanta Symphony in three weeks of programs, including John Adams's *My Father Knew Charles Ives*. On January 25, he makes his debut with "America's Orchestral Academy" – Miami's New World Symphony, in its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary season – conducting the young professional musicians in Beethoven's "Pastoral" Symphony and William Walton's Violin Concerto, performed by James Ehnes.

The Metropolitan Opera will devote a month of preparation to its new production of Benjamin Britten's devastating *Peter Grimes*. Mr. Runnicles will work with a largely American cast, led by Anthony Dean Griffey and Patricia Racette as Grimes and Ellen Orford respectively, for the run of seven performances between February 28 and March 24. The production's director – and Met debutante – John Doyle won a Tony award for his Broadway production of Sondheim's *Sweeney Todd*. In addition to the new *Peter Grimes*, Mr. Runnicles will conduct two other productions at the Met: a performance of *Die Walküre* on February 9 and two performances of *Manon Lescaut* on February 20 and 23.

Earlier in October, Mr. Runnicles was appointed Principal Conductor of the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra. He appeared with the ensemble at the 2001 Edinburgh International Festival conducting Berlioz's *Les Troyens*, which a London *Times* critic described as "one of those evenings when lightning struck." He returned to Edinburgh in 2003 to conduct the orchestra in Wagner's *Lohengrin*, and followed it up with a

concert staging of Strauss's *Elektra* at the BBC Proms, which was described as "gloriously conducted and wondrously played" by the *Guardian*. Orchestra and conductor were reunited at the opening concert of the 2005 Edinburgh International Festival, for the Verdi *Requiem* and Mahler's Symphony No. 3. Mr. Runnicles last appeared in Edinburgh in 2006, leading the orchestra in Bruckner's Symphony No. 6. Of the new appointment, he said: "The energy, enthusiasm, and supreme musicianship of these terrific musicians are unrivalled. I am privileged to have made music with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra over these past six years and deeply privileged to embrace the future at the helm of the Orchestra."

Wyoming's Grand Teton Music Festival – one of the hidden musical gems among summer festivals in the U.S. – announced that Maestro Runnicles will continue to be Music Director through the 2011 season. He'll conduct four weeks of concerts there in 2008, of which details will be announced separately.

### **Donald Runnicles: Season Highlights 2007-08:**

September 18

San Francisco Opera

Wagner: *Tannhäuser*

Also: 9/23, 26, 29; 10/7 & 10/12

October 13

San Francisco Opera

Mozart: *The Magic Flute* (new production)

Also: 10/17, 19, 21, 23, 25, and 28; 11/3

November 8-10

Atlanta, GA

Beethoven: Symphony No. 4

Mozart: Violin Concerto No. 3 (Cho-Liang Lin)

Strauss: *Till Eulenspiegels lustige streiche*

Atlanta Symphony Orchestra

November 23

San Francisco Opera

Stravinsky: *The Rake's Progress*

Also: 11/28; 12/1, 4, 7, & 9

December 1, 5, & 8m

San Francisco Opera

Puccini: *Madama Butterfly*

January 10-12

Atlanta, GA

Adams: *My Father Knew Charles Ives*

Ravel: Piano Concerto for the Left Hand (Adam Golka)

Berlioz: *Symphonie fantastique*

Atlanta Symphony Orchestra

January 13  
Athens, GA (as above)

January 25-26  
Miami, FL  
Strauss: *Till Eulenspiegels lustige streiche*  
Walton: Violin Concerto (James Ehnes)  
Beethoven: Symphony No. 6, "Pastoral"  
New World Symphony

February 9 (broadcast matinee)  
Metropolitan Opera  
Wagner: *Die Walküre*

February 20 & 23  
Metropolitan Opera  
Puccini: *Manon Lescaut*

February 28  
Metropolitan Opera  
Britten: *Peter Grimes* (new production)  
Also: 3/3, 7, 11, 15m, 20, & 24)

April 8 & 11  
Vienna State Opera  
Wagner: *Der fliegende Holländer*

April 13, 16, & 20  
Vienna State Opera  
Strauss: *Der Rosenkavalier*

April 24  
Glasgow, Scotland  
MacMillan: Symphony No. 3  
Mahler: *Das Lied von der Erde* (Cargill; Botha)  
BBC Scottish Symphony

May 1-3  
Atlanta, GA  
Janáček: *Sinfonietta*  
Berlioz: *Requiem* (Joseph Kaiser)  
Atlanta Symphony Orchestra

May 8 & 9  
Atlanta, GA  
Górecki: Symphony No. 3 (Christine Brewer)  
Brahms: Symphony No. 3  
Atlanta Symphony Orchestra

May 15-17

Berlin, Germany

Berlioz: *Requiem* (Joseph Kaiser)

Atlanta Symphony Orchestra Chorus

Berlin Philharmonic

June 3

San Francisco Opera

Wagner: *Das Rheingold* (new production)

Also: 6/6, 14, 19, 22, & 28