



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

Janet Braccio, Bella Voce Communications  
[janetbraccio@comcast.net](mailto:janetbraccio@comcast.net), 303-499-9031

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### **Boulder Philharmonic Orchestra Presents “Opening Night: Genius & Power”**

*The 2011-2012 season, “The Spirit of Boulder,” kicks off September 17  
with pianist Hsing-ay Hsu performing Bach Concerto No. 1*

The Boulder Philharmonic Orchestra opens its 54<sup>th</sup> season, *The Spirit of Boulder*, on Saturday, September 17, 2011, at 7:30 p.m., with a program entitled *Genius and Power*, at Macky Auditorium, at CU-Boulder. Michael Buttermann, music director with the Boulder Phil, will be conducting, with guest pianist Hsing-ay Hsu.

“We are excited to be opening another season of the Boulder Phil that reflects Boulder’s unique culture,” said Buttermann. “We are thrilled that our patrons believe in what we are doing and our audiences continue to grow, season after season.”

The upcoming season marks Michael Buttermann’s sixth season as music director of the Boulder Philharmonic Orchestra, a strong tenure reflected by a significant increase in subscribers and single ticket sales. Ticket sales are up 40% during the last two seasons, led by subscriptions, which are at a six-year high. The orchestra experienced four sell-outs at Macky Auditorium during 2010, including its highest-grossing concert of all time with the “Cirque de la Symphonie” production.

The September 17 concert showcases works by J.S. Bach and Gustav Mahler. “There are, indeed, connections between Mahler and Bach,” said Maestro Buttermann. “Mahler was part of the lineage of great German instrumental composers that counts Bach as its progenitor; and Mahler, as a master conductor and orchestrator, was constantly re-touching the works of previous composers, including Bach, making many transcriptions of Bach’s works for full orchestra,” he said. “The contrast in timbres between a string orchestra and piano on the first half and then the full-technicolor-orchestra on the second half is striking and makes for a rich concert experience.”

The program opens with Concerto No. 1, by J.S. Bach, (the Busoni arrangement), featuring Steinway artist Hsing-ay Hsu (“Sing-I Shoo”), winner of numerous awards, including the William Kapell International silver medal, and now artistic director of the Pendulum New Music concert series at CU-Boulder. “Bach was my first love in music, when I was five years old, and I love how his phrases seem to soar forever,” said Hsu. “He extends certain phrases or elides two phrases together at will; it gives us a sense of the tremendous breath that he works with—an infinite, eternal sense of time and space. It’s a wonderful challenge to communicate the complex character of this music, which is both invincible and vulnerable, anxious but measured, tragic and yet hopeful,” she said. “I get a thrill ‘handling’ such glorious musical substance, and Busoni’s use of additional range and parallel lines really help with sound projection in large concert halls.”

“There is good evidence that, even though this work is often called a ‘harpsichord’ concerto, Bach actually intended it to be performed on the ‘new keyboard’ of the time, what we now call a fortepiano, the forerunner of the modern piano,” said Buttermann. “So taking the extra step and performing it with a modern piano makes sense to me. The first movement is intense and seems to have a fair amount of inner churning about it. The second movement is slow and thoughtful, but still quite serious and not at all carefree. In the third, we return to the energy of the opening movement, but with a little lighter heart.”

(more)



The second half of the program features Symphony No. 1, by Gustav Mahler, completed in 1888. Mahler originally conceived of this piece as a kind of tone poem based on the novel, *Titan*, by Jean Paul; but, he later dropped the “Titan” nickname from the symphony entirely. That first version also had an added movement, *Blumine*, which was not included in revised versions of the work. “So the version we are playing,” said Butterman, “should probably not be referred to with the Titan connection.”

Butterman chose the Mahler symphony to mark the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Mahler’s death, in 1911. “This is, perhaps, one of the greatest ‘first’ symphonies in history,” he said. “It demonstrates a mature mastery (at age 24-28) of orchestration, structure, and expression of emotion in music.

“What’s amazing to me about Mahler,” Butterman continued, “is the way that he can take an enormous collection of instruments (8 horns, 4 trumpets, 4 flutes, 4 clarinets, etc.) and use it in such versatile ways. When he unleashes its power, the orchestra can produce an overwhelming wall of sound. And yet, most of the time, he uses the orchestra judiciously, writing incredibly transparent textures in which one can hear every detail and nuance—no thick muddiness in this piece.”

Butterman also describes the wonderful musical effects throughout the piece. “There are off-stage trumpets at the beginning, a Beethoven 9th-like stillness to start, and horns standing up in the final movement as they deliver the ‘big tune,’” he said. “There’s the amazing way that he turns ‘Frère Jacques’ into a funeral dirge in the third movement. There’s his evocation of nature and bird calls in the opening movement and the rustic peasant ländler in the 2nd. It’s also interesting that Mahler, being a conductor and knowing conductors’ foibles, writes incredibly detailed instructions about how to perform his music. He wants to be absolutely clear that his notation is not subject to interpretation,” said Butterman.

**Program Information: *Genius and Power***

**Saturday, September 17, 2011, 7:30 p.m.**

**Macky Auditorium, CU-Boulder**

**Boulder Philharmonic Orchestra**

Michael Butterman, Music Director

Hsing-ay Hsu, piano

J.S. Bach—Concerto No. 1 in d minor

Gustav Mahler—Symphony No. 1

*Additional activities on September 17:*

10:00 a.m., SuperListening Club with author Don Campbell, Macky Room 102

6:30 p.m., Pre-Concert Talk with Larry Worster, Boulder Bach Festival; TBA, Colorado MahlerFest; and Don Campbell, Macky Auditorium

Tickets for this performance are \$13-\$70 (\$5 for students) and available online at [www.boulderphil.org](http://www.boulderphil.org) or by calling 303-449-1343, ext. 2.

*This program is sponsored in part by the citizens of  
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