Acclaimed Oberlin Orchestra To Tour Asia During the Holidays

2009 National Medal of Arts Honorees’ Seven-Concert Tour to Include China and Singapore

Oberlin, OH – December 6, 2010 – The Oberlin Conservatory of Music, awarded the 2009 National Medal of Arts by President Barack Obama, is to be honored as the first U.S. conservatory invited to perform in China by the country’s leading concert presenter, the Beijing Concert Hall Corporation. The Oberlin Orchestra, led by Professor of Conducting Timothy Weiss, with soloist Lee-Chin Siow, one of Singapore’s most celebrated violinists and Oberlin alumna ’95, will embark on an Asia tour, including concerts in Shanghai on December 25, Beijing on December 31 and January 1, and Singapore on January 6, 2011.

“The Asia Tour illustrates Oberlin’s commitment to international education and bridging cultures through music,” says David H. Stull, dean of the Oberlin Conservatory of Music. “Our students will perform to diverse audiences in large and smaller cities across China before ending the tour in Southeast Asia. In the process, they will gain invaluable professional training for the world beyond the halls of academe, and bring music from America to celebrate the New Year with friends in Asia. We are also very excited to have violinist Lee-Chin Siow, a distinguished Oberlin alumna, to perform as soloist and concurrently share her professional experience with our students.”

Maestro Timothy Weiss, director of the division of conducting and ensembles at the Oberlin Conservatory of Music, adds, “This one-of-a-kind tour is another critical step in the students’ artistic development. To put your skills on the line and play at the highest level night after night while standing up to the rigors of foreign travel and performing in unfamiliar halls is a great professional experience.”

The performances are “in the style of the Vienna Philharmonic New Year’s concerts,” according to Weiss, and begin with Shostakovich’s Festive Overture, followed by Vaughan Williams’ The Lark Ascending and Ravel’s Tzigane—both showcasing Lee-Chin Siow’s lyricism and virtuosity on violin. Also included are Johann Strauss’s Tritsch-Tratsch Polka, Leonard Bernstein’s Symphonic Dances from West Side Story and Gershwin’s Cuban Overture, as well as two Chinese compositions, Great Song of the Flag and Yaozu Suite.

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The Oberlin Orchestra was the first U.S. conservatory orchestra to tour China in 2005 with a pioneering tour of five cities in Northern China and sold-out performances in Shanghai and Beijing.

“The 2005 China tour for the Oberlin Orchestra was a highly successful endeavor,” says Stull. “It builds on Oberlin’s success as a leader in developing cultural and educational interactions between the U.S. and China over more than 100 years, beginning with our exchange programs with Chinese scholars in 1908.”

Since the first China tour, the Oberlin Orchestra has performed at Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles; at Cleveland’s Severance Hall, home of the Cleveland Orchestra; and at New York’s Carnegie Hall in a critically acclaimed performance conducted by Robert Spano, music director of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra. The New York Times praised the performance at Carnegie Hall as “stellar.” Oberlin is excited to return to China with more accolades and successful tour experiences.

In addition to Weiss’s role as director of the division of conducting and ensembles at Oberlin Conservatory, he has served for 19 years as music director of the Oberlin Contemporary Music Ensemble and was the recipient of the Adventurous Programming Award from the American Symphony Orchestra League in New York in 2002. He has also served since 2005 as music director for the Newark Granville Symphony Orchestra, a professional ensemble near Columbus, Ohio, and has been active as a guest conductor with the BBC Scottish Symphony in Glasgow, Scotland, the Britten Sinfonia in London, England, and the U.S.-based International Contemporary Ensemble (ICE).

Soloist Siow (www.leechin.com), gold medalist of the 1994 Henryk Szeryng International Violin Competition, is also a passionate educator. “It’s a great honor for me to work with such talented young musicians from my alma mater and to tour with the Oberlin Orchestra in a part of the world where I grew up. Oberlin gave me some of my best experiences as a student, and this is my way of giving back, to inspire the next generation of musicians,” says Siow.

Siow has performed to critical acclaim in over 20 countries worldwide, from Carnegie Hall to Japan’s Osaka Symphony Hall. Her latest CD, Songs My Father Taught Me, topped HMV’s classical music chart and was picked for Fanfare Magazine’s 2009 Want List: “This is artistry of the highest level.” Winner of multiple international competitions, Siow has served as visiting professor of music at Oberlin’s Conservatory of Music and is currently the director of strings and professor of violin at the College of Charleston, where she is also the co-founder and artistic co-director of the Charleston Music Fest.

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Oberlin Orchestra’s 2010-11 Asia Tour Schedule
December 25 - Shanghai (Oriental Arts Center)
December 29 - Hangzhou (Hangzhou Grand Theater)
December 31, January 1 – Beijing (Beijing Concert Hall)
January 2 - Wuhan (Wuhan Qintai Grand Theater)
January 3 - Chongqing (Chongqing Grand Theater)
January 6 - Singapore (Esplanade Concert Hall)

About the Oberlin Conservatory of Music
Awarded the 2009 National Medal of Arts by President Barack Obama, the Oberlin Conservatory of Music is the nation’s oldest continuously operating conservatory and is renowned internationally as a professional music school of the highest caliber. Founded in 1865 and situated amid the intellectual vitality of Oberlin College since 1867, the conservatory has been a leader in American institutional music training and has been called “a national treasure” by the Washington Post.

Primarily an undergraduate institution, and one which has produced generations of Grammy Award winners and Pulitzer Prize recipients, Oberlin Conservatory has gained a reputation as one of the great American musical institutions; its alumni enjoy illustrious careers in all aspects of the music world.

For more information, concert programs and to purchase concert tickets, visit http://oberlin.edu/asiatour.

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To schedule interviews and for more information, contact Gaye Carleton at Mantra Public Relations, gaye@mantrapublicRelations.com, +1-212-645-1600, or Paul Lockwood, Director of Conservatory Communications, paul.lockwood@oberlin.edu, +1-440-775-8328.

To download additional information and high-resolution photography, visit the online pressroom at http://www.oberlin.edu/asiatour/press.html.