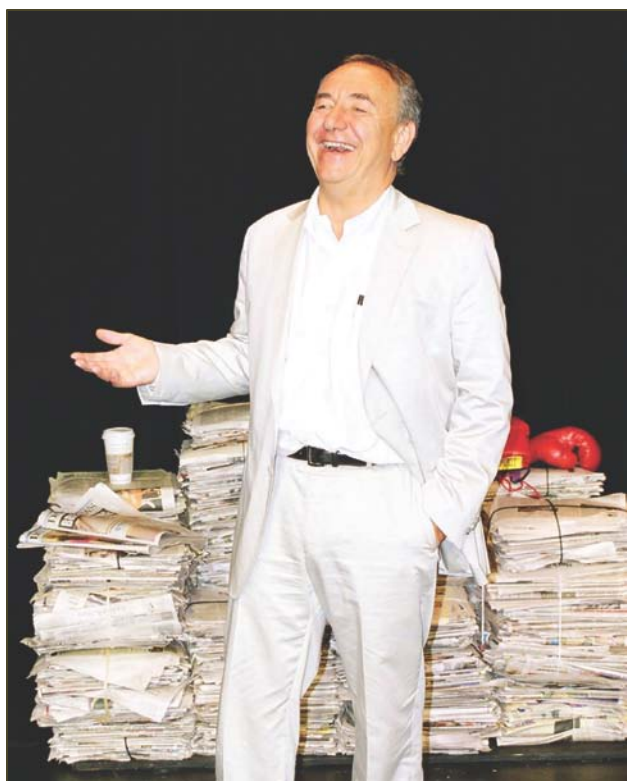


FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – Walnut Creek, CA – January 4, 2009



Will Durst to narrate Copland's *Lincoln Portrait* for the California Symphony on January 24 & 26

When renowned political satirist Will Durst narrates Aaron Copland's stirring *A Lincoln Portrait* for the California Symphony on January 24 & 26, he will apparently be the first professional comedian to assume the honor.

Historically, the reader has typically come from the ranks of film stars, news anchors, generals, politicians, heads of state and even the current President of the United States.

"I knew it would be a significant departure from tradition, possibly even controversial," says Music Director Barry Jekowsky, who earlier in his career conducted the National Symphony performing *A Lincoln Portrait* before a live audience of 500,000. "I selected Will Durst because of his integrity and reputation for honesty – both traits that are synonymous with Abe Lincoln. I have no doubt he will bring a fresh, compelling interpretation to the profound words of our great 16th president."

For an encore, Jekowsky has invited Durst to perform a selection of his trademark comedy repertory. The five-time Emmy nominee was the first comic to perform at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government. He has been nominated seven consecutive times for the American Comedy Awards' Stand Up of the Year. Among other critical praise, Durst has been called "quite possibly the best political satirist working in the country today," by the *New York Times*, "the natural successor to Mort Sahl" by the *New York Post*, and "a modern day Will Rogers" by the *Los Angeles Times*.

Within days of the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, *A Lincoln Portrait* was one of three new works commissioned by conductor André Kostelanetz to serve as a morale-building “musical portrait gallery of great Americans.” Unlike the others, Copland’s piece is written for both speaker and orchestra. *A Lincoln Portrait* quotes from Lincoln’s own letters and speeches, as well the 18th century ballad “Springfield Mountain” and Stephen Foster’s “Camptown Races.”

“Who reads the text, and how it is read, necessarily influences how the piece is perceived,” writes Princeton University musicology scholar Elizabeth Bergman in her book, *Music for the Common Man: Aaron Copland during the Depression and War* (2005, Oxford University Press). “The presence of General ‘Stormin’ Norman Schwarzkopf enhances the image of Lincoln as a wartime leader. James Earl Jones emphasizes the threefold repetition of ‘people’ in the final line—‘of the people, by the people, and for the people’— and in stentorian tones exhorts the listener to action with the righteous anger of an abolitionist. Nebraskan Henry Fonda, on the other hand, carefully measures his intonation to capture Lincoln’s humanity.

“Another notable narrator was Coretta Scott King, who read the text in May 1968 in a memorial concert for her slain husband. In the 1950s, Copland witnessed ‘a fiery young Venezuelan actress’ narrate a performance in her home country. After the final lines ‘the audience of six thousand rose to its feet as one and began shouting so loudly that I couldn’t hear the end of the piece.’ The military dictator Marcos Pérez Jiménez was deposed shortly thereafter, and Copland was ‘later told by an American foreign service officer that the Lincoln Portrait was credited with having inspired the first public demonstration against him—that in effect, it had started a revolution.”

Also on the January 24 & 26 subscription program, the California Symphony will present Mozart’s *Symphony No.35* (the Haffner) and Mendelssohn’s *Symphony No. 3* (Scottish Symphony) for the first time in its 23-year history. “I adore both composers and have always loved performing their music,” says Jekowsky. “Traditionally, we’ve focused on larger orchestral works. So this will be a perfect way to start the New Year , with three extraordinary masterpieces in one concert.”

EVENT DETAILS:

WHAT: Music Director Barry Jekowsky and the California Symphony present Will Durst narrating Aaron Copland’s *A Lincoln Portrait*, Mozart’s *Symphony No.35* (the Haffner) and Mendelssohn’s *Symphony No. 3* (Scottish Symphony)

DATES: Sunday, January 24, 2010 at 4 pm; Tuesday, January 26, 2010 at 7:30 pm

WHERE: Lesher Center for the Arts, 1601 Civic Drive, Walnut Creek, CA 94596

TICKETS: \$44 - \$64; students \$20

PURCHASE: Online at www.LesherArtsCenter.org or by calling (925) 943-SHOW

INFORMATION: Call (925) 280-2490 or visit www.californiasymphony.org

GUEST ARTIST: www.WillDurst.com

* * *

For immediate access to high-res JPEGs of Will Durst, go to

<http://willdurst.com/MediaKit/default.html#pictures>

MEDIA CONTACTS:

Lyla Foggia
Foggia Public Relations
(503) 622-0232
lyla@foggiapr.com

Elaina Birnbaum
California Symphony
(925) 280-2490
elaina@californiasymphony.org