RELEASED TODAY: THOMAS ADÈS AND BOSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA IN WORLD PREMIERE RECORDINGS OF ADÈS’ ACCLAIMED CONCERTO FOR PIANO AND ORCHESTRA AND TOTENTANZ, SET FOR INTERNATIONAL RELEASE ON FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 28

Issued by Deutsche Grammophon, Adès Conducts Adès album documents landmark March 2019 premiere of Concerto for Piano and Orchestra given by Kirill Gerstein and BSO under composer’s direction

Celebrated equally as composer, pianist, and conductor, Adès is currently in his fourth season as BSO Artistic Partner and is the recipient of the Mark M. Horblit Award for distinguished composition, which has supported the recording project

The Boston Symphony Orchestra has added another CD to its extensive and prestigious discography: world-premiere recordings made live at Symphony Hall of Thomas Adès’ Concerto for Piano and Orchestra (performed in 2019) and Totentanz (2016), featuring pianist Kirill Gerstein, mezzo-soprano Christianne
Selected by *The New York Times* as one of the Best Classical Music Premieres of 2019 and hailed by critics worldwide, Thomas Adès’ Concerto for Piano and Orchestra entered the concert repertoire within months of its first performance last March and is fast approaching a tally of 50 performances.

“Here is an unabashed showpiece in the grand manner, replete with thundering double octaves, frame-rattling two-hand chords, and keyboard-sweeping glissandos,” observed Alex Ross in *The New Yorker* about Adès’ Concerto for Piano and Orchestra. The three-movement work’s first performance, given at Boston’s Symphony Hall under the composer’s direction on March 7, 2019, was lauded by *The New York Times* for being “refreshingly, even radically, normal” and “an affectionate, joyous ... tribute to tradition.” Its international reception has proved equally enthusiastic: *The Times* (London) found the work’s U.K. premiere last October to be a “joyous surprise”, while the *Financial Times* ranked it in company with the piano concertos of Rachmaninoff and Prokofiev.

The Concerto for Piano and Orchestra was commissioned for Kirill Gerstein by the Boston Symphony Orchestra, of which Thomas Adès has been the Deborah and Philip Edmundson Artistic Partner since the 2016–17 season. The piece was inspired directly by the virtuosity and majestic musicianship of the composer’s friend and piano duo partner Gerstein. He proposed that Adès should consider writing a piano concerto while they were preparing performances of the latter’s *In Seven Days* with the BSO in 2012.

“I don’t think we have had such a piano concerto in the literature since Prokofiev and Ravel,” Gerstein noted in an interview with *Gramophone* magazine. “I really think it’s a masterpiece. It’s quite concise. It does what a piano concerto should do— it has octaves, a cadenza, a slow movement of gravitas. He references the traditional models, but you never think he is doing something derivative.”

Tradition also played its part in *Totentanz*, an all-encompassing dialogue with Death for two soloists and vast symphonic forces. Adès took the work’s text from the anonymous verse attached to a 15th-century cloth frieze by German artist Bernt Notke (c. 1435–c. 1509) in Lübeck’s Marienkirche. “Destroyed by bombing in World War II, the frieze depicted members of every category of human society in strictly descending order of status, from the Pope to a baby,” the composer observes. “In between each human figure was an image of Death, dancing and inviting the humans to join him. In this setting, each of the humans in turn is represented by a low soprano, and Death by a baritone.” *Totentanz* reflects the full range of the original poetry, conjuring up everything from the horror to the humor of death. It is dedicated to the memory of Witold Lutosławski (1913–1994) and of his wife, Danuta.

Adès conducted the BBC Symphony Orchestra, Christianne Stotijn, and baritone Simon Keenlyside in the work’s world premiere at the Royal Albert Hall on July 17, 2013. He chose *Totentanz* to launch his tenure three years later as the Boston Symphony Orchestra’s Deborah and Philip Edmundson Artistic Partner, a post specially created for him. “I am delighted to be joining the BSO family of musicians and colleagues and to embark on this particular artistic adventure,” said Adès at the time. “From my first rehearsal with this amazing orchestra—almost exactly five years ago—I knew that we shared a musical wavelength, and in our subsequent meetings I’ve been gratified to sense the relationship deepening each time.”

**Adès Recording Project Supported by the Mark M. Horblit “Merit Award”**

The Boston Symphony Orchestra has presented Thomas Adès with the *Mark M. Horblit “Merit Award”* for distinguished composition. The award was created in 1947 by the late Boston attorney Mark M. Horblit to, in his own words, “foster and promote the writing of symphonic compositions ... in
recognition of meritorious work in that field.” Mr. Adès is the 23rd recipient of the award, which includes a cash prize of $5,000.


As part of the award, the BSO is supporting the release of two CDs of Mr. Adès’ music—the DG release with the BSO, and a release on myrios classics that includes In Seven Days with Kirill Gerstein as piano soloist and the Tanglewood Music Center Orchestra, conducted by the composer. The second CD, which will be released in late May, also includes solo Adès piano works (performed by Mr. Gerstein) and Adès’ Concert Paraphrase on Powder Her Face for two pianos (with Gerstein and Adès). The solo and two-piano works were recorded in Symphony Hall.

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PRESS CONTACT:
Bernadette Horgan, Director of Public Relations (bhorgan@bsol.org) 617-638-9285
Matthew Erikson, Senior Publicist (merikson@bsol.org) 617-638-9284