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ORCHESTRA

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**Leonard Slatkin and the Baltimore Symphony Celebrate
Edgar Allan Poe's 200th Birthday with Musical Setting of
Poe's Classic Poems, November 6-8**

John Astin, Baltimore native and former The Addams Family cast member, narrates

Baltimore, Md. (October 3, 2008) – Composer and conductor **Leonard Slatkin** will lead the **Baltimore Symphony Orchestra** in a musical tribute to Baltimore's hometown hero—the late **Edgar Allan Poe**, in honor of the legendary poet's 200th birthday, on **Thursday, November 6** at **The Music Center at Strathmore** and **Friday and Saturday, November 7 and 8** at **Joseph Meyerhoff Symphony Hall**. Slatkin, former music director of the National Symphony in Washington, D.C., will conduct the BSO in his own composition, *The Raven*, a musical setting of several of Poe's classic poems, **narrated by John Astin** of *The Addams Family* fame. The dramatic and witty overture to Rossini's opera *The Thieving Magpie* and Sibelius' Symphony No. 2, a heroic picture of the composer's native Finland, round out the program. *See below for complete program information.*

Admired by many for his skill as a conductor, Leonard Slatkin's ability as a composer is perhaps one of the classical music community's best kept secrets. Maestro Slatkin originally composed *The Raven* for horror-film actor Vincent Price and the Saint Louis Symphony Orchestra, debuting the piece as part of that orchestra's family series concerts on May 2, 1971. Given Baltimore's ties to Poe, it is particularly appropriate that Slatkin returns to the BSO podium after a 15 year hiatus to lead this seminal work. The five poems contained within Slatkin's *The Raven* are: *The Sleeper*, *The Bells*, *Romance*, *The Coliseum* and *The Raven*. Each poem in the work is recited along with orchestral accompaniment. Maestro Slatkin explains, "*The Raven* is a brief excursion into the

poetic world of Edgar Allan Poe. In it, one can find multitude of images that lend themselves to various musical treatments. I have chosen to use five of Poe's works and set them in different musical guises."

Baltimore native John Astin will read the work's culminating poem, *The Raven*. Astin first achieved pop culture status through his portrayal of the kooky patriarch "Gomez Addams" in the hit TV series *The Addams Family* and has since appeared in numerous film, screen and stage productions. Though *The Raven* was originally conceived for just one narrator, Vincent Price, the BSO will use a different narrator for each of the poems, all from the Baltimore area: John Astin, Tony Tsendeas, Rosemary Knowler, Denise Diggs and Jon Spelman.

Gioachino Rossini's *La Gazza Ladra* ("The Thieving Magpie") delivers the drama and stunning orchestral dexterity that helped establish Rossini as a giant of Italian opera. *La gazza ladra* continues the theme of devilish birds causing trouble. This time, a young servant girl is mistakenly accused for the theft of a silver spoon, rather than the real culprit: a kleptomaniac pet magpie. While the complete opera is rarely performed today, its witty overture remains one of Rossini's best, with its jaunty and memorable musical melodies.

Finnish composer Jean Sibelius' Symphony No. 2—with its soaring, reoccurring three-note motif and grandiose finale—is often described as a graphic portrayal of the Finnish struggle against the Russians, an assertion which Sibelius vehemently denied. Rather, the composer describes his inspiration: "It is as though the Almighty had thrown the pieces of a mosaic down from the floor of heaven and told me to put them together."

Leonard Slatkin, conductor and composer

Internationally recognized American conductor Leonard Slatkin is music director of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra and principal guest conductor of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra. He completed his 12th and final season as music director of the National Symphony Orchestra in the 2007-2008 season. Mr. Slatkin is also the principal guest conductor of the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and music advisor to the Nashville Symphony Orchestra.

Following a successful tenure as music director of the Saint Louis Symphony from 1979 until 1996, Mr. Slatkin was named conductor laureate. He has served as festival director of the Cleveland Orchestra's Blossom Festival (1990-1999), principal guest conductor of the Philharmonia Orchestra (1997-2000), chief conductor of the BBC Symphony Orchestra (2000-2004) and principal guest conductor of the Los Angeles Philharmonic at the Hollywood Bowl (2004-2007).

Mr. Slatkin has made regular appearances with virtually every major international orchestra, including the New York Philharmonic, Berlin Philharmonic, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Concertgebouw Orchestra of Amsterdam and the Boston Symphony Orchestra. His performances of opera have taken him to leading opera companies in the U.S. and around the world, including the Metropolitan Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago,

Washington National Opera and Vienna State Opera. A recent highlight is a European tour with the Pittsburgh Symphony, stepping in at the last minute to replace Sir Andrew Davis.

Leonard Slatkin's more than 100 recordings have been recognized with five Grammy awards and more than sixty other Grammy nominations. He has recorded with the National Symphony Orchestra, Saint Louis Symphony, Nashville Symphony Orchestra, Philharmonia Orchestra, London Philharmonic, BBC Symphony and Concert Orchestras, London Symphony and Bayerischer Rundfunk Orchestra.

John Astin, narrator

Dark-haired, usually mustachioed American actor with a cheeky grin who achieved pop culture status through his portrayal of the kooky patriarch "Gomez Addams" in the hit TV series *The Addams Family* (1964), John Astin was born March 30, 1930, in Baltimore. He attended Johns Hopkins University and studied mathematics. However, he soon discovered a passion for the theater and began performing in minor plays and doing voice-over work for commercials. He first got noticed in a small role in *West Side Story* (1961), and then appeared in several other films before being cast as "Gomez Addams." While *The Addams Family* was initially a huge hit, its popularity petered out after two years, and Astin moved on to other work including the offbeat *Bunny O'Hare* (1971), playing a grizzled but not particularly bright gunfighter in the western spoof *Evil Roy Slade* (1972) (TV), an appearance in the Disney comedy *Freaky Friday* (1976) and dual roles in *European Vacation* (1985).

He has since lent his comedic talents to numerous appearances as "Dr. Gangreen" in several *Killer Tomato* movies, and has contributed his voice to recreate "Gomez Addams" in the animated series *The Addams Family* (1992), and then played "Grandpa Addams" in the short-lived TV series *The New Addams Family* (1998). In addition, Astin has contributed voices to several animated shows, and continues to appear in films.

COMPLETE PROGRAM INFORMATION

Sibelius' Symphony No. 2

Thursday, November 6, 2008 at 8:00 p.m. –The Music Center at Strathmore*

Friday, November 7, 2008 at 8:00 p.m. –Joseph Meyerhoff Symphony Hall (JMSH)

Saturday, November 8, 2008 at 8:00 p.m. –JMSH

Leonard Slatkin, conductor

John Astin, narrator

Tony Tsendeas, narrator

Rosemary Knower, narrator

Denise Diggs, narrator

Jon Spelman, narrator

Slatkin: *The Raven* ‡

Sibelius: Symphony No. 2

Rossini: Overture to *The Thieving Magpie*

* *Music Notes LIVE!* is a pre-concert lecture, beginning at 7 p.m. in the Music Center at Strathmore. The program is free to all ticket holders.

‡ Denotes a BSO premiere

Tickets range from \$25 to \$80 and are available through the BSO Ticket Office, 410.783.8000, 877.BSO.1444 or BSOmusic.org.