

MEDIA RELEASE

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Sydney Symphony announces new Assistant Conductor – Jessica Cottis

26 July, 2012 -- The Sydney Symphony is delighted to announce the appointment of 35-year-old Australian-British conductor Jessica Cottis to the position of Sydney Symphony Assistant Conductor.

Jessica Cottis takes over from Australian conductor Nicholas Carter who started with the Orchestra in 2009 as Assistant Conductor and subsequently became Associate Conductor 18 months later. Carter has now gone on to forge a career throughout Australia and internationally.

The Assistant Conductor position, supported by the orchestra's Premier Partner Credit Suisse and Symphony Services International, is a two-year appointment which sees Jessica work closely with, and be mentored by, Sydney Symphony Principal Conductor Vladimir Ashkenazy in addition to other visiting guest conductors.

Cottis will also assist and act as cover conductor for Vladimir Ashkenazy on the orchestra's forthcoming China Tour in October 2012.

In 2012, Cottis will conduct a number of Sydney Symphony schools concerts and, in 2013, will conduct the orchestra in its Mozart in the City concerts at City Recital Hall Angel Place, as well as in NSW regional touring concerts.

According to Sydney Symphony's Director of Artistic Planning, Peter Czornyj, Cottis was a stand-out candidate when auditions took place earlier this year.

"Jessica greatly impressed us with her thorough preparation and clear conducting technique, displaying a range of gestures and inspirational authority," said Czornyj.

"The Sydney Symphony sees its role as not only to perform concerts of the highest calibre, but also to ensure Australia's tradition of nurturing and developing world-class musicians and conductors continues. The Assistant Conductor position allows for the Sydney Symphony to ensure that exceptionally talented young conductors receive exposure to great conductors and have the training and experience they need to develop successful careers," added Czornyj.

Of the appointment, Jessica Cottis said: "I am thrilled to accept the post of Sydney Symphony Assistant Conductor. I have incredibly formative memories of hearing the orchestra in my teens. After over a decade abroad, I'm delighted and honoured to come back home to work with these wonderful musicians.

"I look forward to working closely with the orchestra over the next two years and am particularly excited to work with Principal Conductor Vladimir Ashkenazy and also with newly commissioned Australian composers. This position will offer me a wonderful opportunity to develop my conducting career and I am looking forward to it immensely.

"My thanks go to Credit Suisse for supporting this position, and to the Sydney Symphony and Vladimir Ashkenazy for entrusting me with this important role."

Jessica recently completed a two-year appointment as Assistant Conductor of the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra (BBC SSO) under their Chief Conductor Donald Runnicles. She also recently completed a Fellowship in Conducting at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland.

She made her BBC Proms debut in 2010, conducting works by James Dillon with Scotland's MusicLab Ensemble. She subsequently conducted the premiere of Dillon's epic cycle 'Nine Rivers' with the BBC SSO and Les Percussions de Strasbourg, described by The Guardian as 'unquestionably the most significant new-music event in Britain this year'.

Cottis has regularly guest conducted Scotland's contemporary music ensemble, Red Note and, as Artistic Director of Bloomsbury Opera, has conducted *Die Zauberflöte*, *Don Giovanni*, *Die Fledermaus*, *Hansel and Gretel* and *Eugene Onegin*. She has also conducted the premiere of new operas at Aldeburgh, the Royal Academy of Music, and in Nuremberg, and recently conducted Weill's *The Seven Deadly Sins* for Scottish Opera/Company Chordelia.

Cottis obtained a first class honours degree in organ, piano and musicology from the Australian National University. A prize-winner in the Symphony Australia Young Performers Award, she continued her studies as an organist with Marie-Claire Alain in Paris, winning awards from the Royal Philharmonic Society and Royal College of Organists, and made her European debut at Westminster Cathedral in 2003.

She worked professionally as an organist in London and Paris until a hand injury subsequently halted her playing career and she read law at the University of London whilst undertaking postgraduate conducting studies at the Royal Academy of Music. Cottis was awarded the Academy's top conducting prizes upon graduation in July 2009, the same month she was appointed to her positions at the BBC SSO and RCS, and also Manson Fellow in Composition at the Royal Academy of Music.

In 2012, she appeared on the BBC2 series 'Maestro at the Opera' as conducting mentor to DJ Trevor Nelson, and was a jury member for the finals of the BBC Young Musician Competition.

For more information on Jessica Cottis, visit: www.jessicacottis.com

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