



ROBERT SPANO, Music Director • DONALD RUNNICLES, Principal Guest Conductor

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**ASO ASSISTANT CONDUCTOR AND
LEAGUE OF AMERICAN ORCHESTRAS FELLOW MEI-ANN CHEN
TO LEAD ATLANTA SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
AT VERIZON WIRELESS AMPHITHEATRE AT ENCORE PARK
SATURDAY, JULY 11, 2009**

Program To Feature Award-Winning Composer John Williams’s *Star Wars* Suite

Newly Released Hi-Definition NASA Footage To Accompany Holst’s *The Planets*

ASO Assistant Conductor and League of American Orchestras Fellow Mei-Ann Chen will lead the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra on a rocketing musical tour of the cosmos on the stage of Verizon Wireless Amphitheatre at Encore Park on Saturday, July 11, 2009, at 8:00 p.m. The night will begin with a pre-concert “Top of the Lawn” conversation hosted by ASO Insider Ken Meltzer at 7:10 p.m., and will follow with a concert featuring Strauss’s popular *Sunrise*, from *Also sprach Zarathustra*, immortalized in the film *2001: A Space Odyssey*, followed by Award-winning composer John Williams’s *Star Wars* Suite, and concluding with newly released vivid hi-definition NASA footage choreographed to accompany Holst’s *The Planets*. This hi-definition footage explores our planets using spectacular visual effects, putting a new spin on our solar system. The new 12,000-seat state-of-the-art facility is located in Alpharetta, GA (north of Atlanta), and opened in May 2008.

The Amphitheatre — nominated by Pollstar Concert Industry Awards as 2008 “Best New Major Concert Venue” and “Best Major Outdoor Concert Venue,” — serves as the outdoor home to the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra. The scope of Verizon Wireless Amphitheatre at Encore Park has brought a new dimension to the region’s seasonal artistic offerings by featuring concerts with the internationally-recognized Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, leading popular presentations, as well as an emphasis on community events — including high school graduations, local fundraising events, and collaborations to create family-themed days, high school music concerts, and competitions.

The Amphitheatre Experience

“When a cool breeze whisked away the muggy air at sunset, the north Atlanta suburbs felt a little like summer classic music festivals at Tanglewood, Aspen or Santa Fe,” said *The Birmingham News* after the ASO’s all-Beethoven concert last summer.

The Amphitheatre opened on May 10, 2008 with Robert Spano and the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra and Chorus, including a 700-musician grand-finale performance of Tchaikovsky's *1812 Overture*. The 2008 inaugural classical concert season also featured Robert Spano and the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra in an array of programs including a concert-staged production of Puccini's *La Bohème*, a 4th of July spectacular, a free concert for the community, and artists including Garrick Ohlsson, Robert McDuffie, Julie Andrews, Robert Osborne (Turner Classic Movies), and the Marcus Roberts Trio.

Each Atlanta Symphony Orchestra concert at Verizon Wireless Amphitheatre at Encore Park offers table-seating in the main Orchestra section of the venue, reserved seating throughout the pavilion, and lawn seating. Complementing this seating variation is an experience influenced by the repertoire and theme of the Orchestra: Live on-site broadcasts, Top of the Lawn conversations, and themed cuisine allow audiences to create their own unique evening of enjoyment at the ASO's summer home.

Live On-Site Broadcast & Text-Message Questions from Audience

The Atlanta Symphony continues the tradition of introducing members of the ASO to the audience with an evening-long live, on-site broadcast of the concert on large 15'x20' screens, which are permanently affixed on either side of the stage. The live feed will include a pre-concert show, as well as live intermission interviews of guest artists and musicians from the Orchestra, fueled by text-message questions sent by the audience the night of the concert.

Top of the Lawn

Pre-concert Top of the Lawn events will continue in 2009. ASO Insider and Program Annotator Ken Meltzer will take his pre-concert conversations to the tree-lined lawn of the Amphitheatre prior to each Atlanta Symphony Orchestra concert at the venue. Ken's conversations with ASO musicians will take place at the top-center of the lawn, and include a Q&A with the audience. All Top of the Lawn events begin at 7:10 p.m. before each 8:00 p.m. ASO concert.

Themed Cuisine

Ovations, the on-site caterer for Verizon Wireless Amphitheatre, will offer themed cuisine to complement the programming of all ASO concerts at the Amphitheatre. For the ASO's July 11th concert, a Space/Astronaut themed picnic basket will accompany the regular fare offered at the venue. The \$30 picnic basket (which serves two people) will feature *Martian Mash* avocado dip, *Fresh Skywalker* salsa and chips, *Take Me to Your Leader* fresh mozzarella with heirloom tomatoes balsamic vinegar and EVOO, and *Out of This World* chilled shrimp and dill skewers. Concertgoers may also enjoy *Wookie Cookies* (cinnamon and chocolate chip cookies) from the concessions the night of the concert.

To pre-order a picnic basket, or to view the full menu available for each concert, visit the General Info/Food and Beverage section online at <http://www.vzwamp.com/planvisit/food-and-beverage.php>.

Family Four Pack

The Atlanta Symphony Orchestra is offering a Family Four Pack for this summer's classical concerts at Verizon Wireless Amphitheatre. The Family Four Pack includes four General Admission Lawn Tickets, four Lawn Chair Rentals, four Food Baskets (e.g. four hot dogs, fries, sodas), and one Parking Pass for \$75. For more information, visit atlantasymphony.org.

Remaining Atlanta Symphony Orchestra Concerts

Remaining scheduled ASO concerts at Verizon Wireless Amphitheatre at Encore Park:

- On Saturday, July 25, 2009 at 8:00 p.m., Hugh Wolff will lead the Orchestra in an all-Beethoven concert featuring pianist Juho Pohjonen in his ASO debut performing the Piano Concerto No. 3. Also on the program will be *Leonore* Overture No. 3, and the Symphony No. 7.
- On Saturday, August 1, 2009 at 8:30 p.m., Richard Kaufman will lead the ASO in “Rodgers and Hammerstein at the Movies,” a Turner Classic Movies Night hosted by TCM Host Robert Osborne. The program will feature footage from Rodgers and Hammerstein classics such as *State Fair*, *The King and I*, *South Pacific*, *Oklahoma*, *The Sound of Music*, and *Carousel*.
- On Saturday, August 15, 2009 at 8:00 p.m., sixteen-year-old conductor Ilyich Rivas will make his U.S. debut leading the ASO in Verdi’s *Vespri* Overture, Tchaikovsky’s Symphony No. 4, and Mendelssohn’s Violin Concerto featuring Elena Urioste as soloist.
- As part of the annual Starbucks Free Parks Concerts, the ASO will perform a free concert for the community at the Amphitheatre in September 2009. Details will be announced.

** The gates for all ASO concerts will open one hour before the start of each concert.*

Community Concerts and Events

As part of the annual Starbucks Free Parks Concerts, the ASO will perform a free concert for the community at the Amphitheatre in September 2009. Details will be announced.

On Saturday, May 23, 2009, the local Alpharetta High School Class of 2009 held their graduation at Verizon Wireless Amphitheatre at Encore Park, one of a number of community events planned to take place at the venue.

On Saturday, April 18, 2009, the Greater North Fulton Chamber of Commerce held its 36th Annual Chairman’s Gala at Verizon Wireless Amphitheatre at Encore Park.

Popular Concerts

The ASO recently presented two sold-out concerts of the Dave Matthews Band on April 27 and 28, 2009. Other remaining scheduled concerts include: Stevie Wonder on June 24, 2009; StarFest featuring Jason Mraz on July 27, 2009; Bob Dylan with John Mellencamp and Willie Nelson on July 30, 2009; Incubus on August 14, 2009; Judas Priest/Whitesnake on August 20, 2009; O.A.R on August 21, 2009; and Journey on September 19, 2009, among others. Additional concerts will be announced. For up-to-date concert listings and information, visit vzwamp.com.

The 2009 venue sponsors include Verizon Wireless, Bud Light, AirTran Airways, Cadillac, Chevrolet, Georgia Natural Gas, Belvedere, Vineyard Brands, Publix, Shoreline Limousine and North Fulton Regional Hospital.

Artists

The first woman to win the Malko International Conductors Competition (2005), **Mei-Ann Chen** has established herself as a versatile, highly communicative and inspirational young artist. Currently Assistant Conductor of Robert Spano and the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, she was awarded the 2007 Taki Concordia Fellowship; as a result of that award, she appeared jointly with Marin Alsop and Stefan Sanderling in highly acclaimed subscription concerts with the Baltimore Symphony, Colorado Symphony and Florida Orchestra. Past and upcoming engagements include all principal Danish orchestras, Symphonies of Alabama, Atlanta, Baltimore, Chattanooga, Chicago Sinfonietta, Florida, Fort Worth, Grand Teton Music Festival, Honolulu, Huntsville, Kalamazoo, Lexington Philharmonic, Manhattan School of Music, Memphis, National at Kennedy Center, Norrlands Opera in Sweden, Norwegian Radio (Oslo), Oregon, Princeton, Seattle, Taiwan National, Trondheim in Norway, Toronto in Canada, and Wintergreen Summer Music Festival.

Before coming to Atlanta, Mei-Ann served as Assistant Conductor of the Oregon Symphony from 2003 to 2005 and in 2002, **Ms. Chen** was unanimously selected as Music Director of the Portland Youth Philharmonic in Oregon, the oldest of its kind and the model for many of the youth orchestras in the United States. During her five-year tenure with the orchestra, she led its sold-out debut in Carnegie Hall, received an ASCAP award for innovative programming, established new partnerships with Oregon Symphony and Chamber Music Northwest, and developed new and unique musicianship programs for the orchestra's members. She was honored with a Sunburst Award from Young Audiences for her contribution to music education.

Born in Taiwan, **Mei-Ann Chen** has lived in the United States since 1989. She holds a Doctor of Musical Arts degree in conducting from the University of Michigan, where she was a student of Kenneth Kiesler. Prior to that, she was the first recipient in New England Conservatory's history to receive double master's degrees simultaneously in violin and conducting. As a violinist, she has performed in Carnegie Hall and Tanglewood Music Festival numerous times.

Chen came to Atlanta Symphony Orchestra as a member of the American Conducting Fellows Program, a national conductor-training program developed and managed by the American Symphony Orchestra League to support the musical and leadership development of exceptionally talented conductors in the early stages of their professional careers. Aiming to improve the qualifications of American conductors to assume leadership roles as music directors of American orchestras, the program is funded by major grants from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts.

About the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra

The **Atlanta Symphony Orchestra**, currently in its 64th season, is one of America's leading orchestras, known for the excellence of its live performances, presentations, renowned choruses, and its impressive list of Grammy® Award-winning recordings. The leading cultural organization in the Southeast, the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra serves as the cornerstone for artistic development and music education in the region. Under the Creative Partnership of Music Director Robert Spano, Principal Guest Conductor Donald Runnicles, and President and CEO Allison Vulgamore since September 2001, the Orchestra and audiences together explore a creative programming mix, recordings, and visual enhancements, such as the ASO Theater of a

Concert, the Orchestra's continuing exploration of different formats, settings, and enhancements for the musical performance experience. Another example is the Atlanta School of Composers,

which reflects Mr. Spano and the Orchestra's commitment to nurturing and championing music through multi-year partnerships defining a new generation of American composers.

During its 31-year history with Telarc, the Orchestra has recorded more than 100 albums and its recordings have won 26 Grammy Awards in categories including Best Classical Album, Best Orchestral Performance, Best Choral Performance, and Best Opera Performance. The ASO Chorus has earned nine Grammy® Awards for Best Choral Performance, most recently for the Berlioz Requiem in 2005.

The Atlanta Symphony Orchestra performs more than 200 concerts each year to a combined audience of more than a half million in a full schedule of performances which also feature educational and community concerts. A recognized leader and supporter of contemporary American music, the Orchestra recently received the 2007 award for Strongest Commitment to New American Music from the American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers. In addition, Music Director Robert Spano was named *Musical America* 2008 Conductor of the Year. With the opening of the 12,000-seat Verizon Wireless Amphitheatre at Encore Park (vzwamp.com) in May 2008, the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra became the first U.S. orchestra to annually perform and present in its concert hall, and in two amphitheatres. For 36 years, the Orchestra has also performed at the legendary Chastain Park Amphitheater, the award-winning 6,800 seat venue in Atlanta, during the ASO's annual Delta Classic Chastain concert series (deltaclassicchastain.com).

About Verizon Wireless

Verizon Wireless operates the nation's most reliable and largest wireless voice and data network, serving more than 86.6 million customers. Headquartered in Basking Ridge, N.J., with more than 86,000 employees nationwide, Verizon Wireless is a joint venture of Verizon Communications (NYSE: VZ) and Vodafone (NYSE and LSE: VOD). For more information, visit verizonwireless.com. To preview and request broadcast-quality video footage and high-resolution stills of Verizon Wireless operations, log on to the Verizon Wireless Multimedia Library at verizonwireless.com/multimedia.

About the Woodruff Arts Center

The Woodruff Arts Center is the largest arts center in the Southeast as well as one of the largest in the nation. The Woodruff is unique in that it combines four visual and performing arts divisions on one campus as one not-for-profit organization. Opening in 1968, the Woodruff Arts Center is home to the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, Alliance Theatre, High Museum of Art, and Young Audiences. To learn more about the Woodruff Arts Center, please visit woodruffcenter.org.

Ticket Information

Single tickets for Atlanta Symphony Orchestra concerts at Verizon Wireless Amphitheatre are now available to the public. Tickets remaining for Orchestral and Popular Concerts may be purchased at the **Woodruff Arts Center Box Office**, located in the Woodruff Arts Center at 15th and Peachtree Streets. Box office hours are Monday through Friday, 10:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., and Saturday and Sunday, 12:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. Tickets may also be purchased at the **Verizon Wireless Amphitheatre Box Office** Monday through Friday, noon to 4:00 p.m., and Saturdays from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. To purchase tickets online, visit atlantasymphony.org

or **ticketmaster.com**. Tickets may also be purchased by calling **1-800-745-3000**, or by visiting any Ticketmaster outlet, including Publix Super Markets.

Saturday, July 11, 2009 (*Star Wars*) — table, concert, and lawn seating: \$21–\$59

Saturday, July 25, 2009 (All-Beethoven) — table, concert, and lawn seating: \$21–\$59

Saturday, August 1, 2009 (Rodgers and Hammerstein) — table, concert, and lawn seating: \$21–\$59

Saturday, August 15, 2009 (Rising Stars) — table, concert, and lawn seating: \$21–\$59

The Starbucks Free Parks Concert for the community will be a free event, but will require tickets. Details will be announced.

Additional concert and ticket information for popular concerts will be announced.

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Verizon Wireless Amphitheatre at Encore Park is owned by the Robert W. Woodruff Arts Center, Inc., and is operated by the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra. Upon the opening of the Amphitheatre, the ASO became the first U.S. orchestra to perform and present in its concert hall and in two amphitheatres. For 36 years, the ASO has presented and performed concerts at Chastain Park Amphitheater, the legendary award-winning 6,800-seat venue in Atlanta. The investment by the Woodruff Arts Center, with the support of the Woodruff Foundation, will advance the mission of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra and also continue to have a significant economic impact on the entire region.

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Verizon Wireless Amphitheatre at Encore Park is located at 2200 Encore Parkway, Alpharetta, GA, 30009. For information, visit **atlantasymphony.org** or **vzwamp.com**, or call (404) 733-5010.

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Major support is provided by the Fulton County Board of Commissioners under the guidance of the Fulton County Arts Council.

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ATLANTA SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA: STAR WARS AND MORE

Verizon Wireless Amphitheatre at Encore Park, Alpharetta, GA

Saturday, July 11, 2009, 8:00 p.m.

Top of the Lawn 7:10 p.m.

Mei-Ann Chen, conductor
Atlanta Symphony Orchestra

STRAUSS
WILLIAMS
HOLST

Sunrise, from Also sprach Zarathustra
Star Wars Suite
The Planets

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