



MEDIA RELEASE

Brad Mehldau appointed as Wigmore Hall Jazz Series Artistic Director (2009 – 2011)

28 February 2008

John Gilhooly, Director of Wigmore Hall, has today announced that **Brad Mehldau**, the much fêted American jazz pianist and composer, will curate an annual four-concert jazz series at the Hall during the 2009/10 and 2010/11 seasons.

“Brad Mehldau is steeped in the classical music tradition and is one of the most fluid and inventive musicians that I have ever encountered. We are very pleased and excited to welcome him to Wigmore Hall”.

Mehldau will appear in at least two of the four annual concerts which he will oversee at the venue, continuing the Wigmore Hall tradition of hosting a small number of annual acoustic jazz events each year.

Brad Mehldau said “It’s a real honour to be given the opportunity to programme events at Wigmore Hall. In 2004, I performed there for two nights and know what a special space it is from an acoustic standpoint - the room really gives something back to you when you play. The audiences there were exceptional - it really is a listening crowd, and you can sense their passion for music. London audiences are among the most well informed and adventurous as I have seen anywhere, so it will be a distinct pleasure to curate these programmes. I hope that my artistic input will provide the London public with something illuminating”.

Brad Mehldau

Jazz pianist Brad Mehldau has recorded and performed extensively since the early 1990s. His most consistent output over the years has taken place in the trio format. Starting in 1996, his group released a series of five records on Warner Bros. entitled *The Art of the Trio*. Mehldau also has a solo piano recording entitled *Elegiac Cycle*, and a record called *Places* that includes both solo piano and trio songs. *Elegiac Cycle* and *Places* might be called “concept” albums. They are made up exclusively of original material and have central themes that hover over the compositions. Other Mehldau recordings include *Largo*, a collaborative effort with the innovative musician and producer Jon Brion, and *Anything Goes* - a trio outing with bassist Larry Grenadier and drummer Jorge Rossy.

His first record for Nonesuch, *Brad Mehldau Live In Tokyo*, was released in September 2004. After ten rewarding years with Rossy playing in Mehldau’s regular trio, drummer Jeff Ballard joined the band in 2005. The label released its first album from the Brad Mehldau Trio - *Day Is Done* - in September 2005.

Mehldau's musical personality forms a dichotomy. He is first and foremost an improviser, and greatly cherishes the surprise and wonder that can occur from a spontaneous musical idea that is expressed directly, in real time. But he also has a deep fascination for the formal architecture of music, and it informs everything he plays. In his most inspired playing, the actual structure of his musical thought serves as an expressive device. As he plays, he listens to how ideas unwind, and the order in which they reveal themselves. Each tune has a strongly felt narrative arch, whether it expresses itself in a beginning, an end, or something left intentionally open-ended. The two sides of Mehldau's personality - the improviser and the formalist - play off each other, and the effect is often something like controlled chaos.

Mehldau has performed around the world at a steady pace since the mid-1990s, with his trio and as a solo pianist. His performances convey a wide range of expression. There is often an intellectual rigor to the continuous process of abstraction that may take place on a given tune, and a certain density of information. That could be followed by a stripped down, emotionally direct ballad. Mehldau favors juxtaposing extremes. He has attracted a sizeable following over the years, one that has grown to expect a singular, intense experience in his performance.

In addition to his trio and solo projects, Mehldau has worked with a number of great jazz musicians, including a rewarding gig with saxophonist Joshua Redman's band for two years, recording and concerts with Pat Metheny, Charlie Haden, and Lee Konitz, and recording as a sideman with the likes of Michael Brecker, Wayne Shorter, John Scofield, and Charles Lloyd. For more than a decade, he has collaborated with several musicians and peers whom he respects greatly, including the guitarists Peter Bernstein and Kurt Rosenwinkel and tenor saxophonist Mark Turner.

Mehldau also has played on a number of recordings outside of the jazz idiom, like Willie Nelson's Teatro and singer-songwriter Joe Henry's Scar. His music has appeared in several movies, including Stanley Kubrick's Eyes Wide Shut and Wim Wender's Million Dollar Hotel. He also composed an original soundtrack for the French film, Ma Femme Est Une Actrice. Mehldau recently composed two new works commissioned by Carnegie Hall for voice and piano, The Blue Estuaries and The Book of Hours: Love Poems to God, which were performed in the spring of 2005 with the acclaimed classical soprano, Renee Fleming. These songs were recorded with Fleming and released in 2006 on the Love Sublime record; simultaneously, Nonesuch released an album of Mehldau's jazz compositions for trio entitled House On Hill. In March 2007 Mehldau debuted the piano concerto The Brady Bunch Variations for piano and orchestra at Théâtre du Châtelet in Paris with Orchestre National d'Île-de-France.

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