



Symphony Orchestra of India appoints Martyn Brabbins as Chief Conductor

'This is clearly an orchestra that's going places. Their excitement, sense of discovery and real zest for the music translated to the audience,' *The Arts Desk*

The Symphony Orchestra of India is delighted to announce the appointment of Martyn Brabbins as its Chief Conductor. His tenure with India's first and only professional orchestra is set to begin on 1 January 2026. He will conduct four programmes each season at the National Centre for the Performing Arts in Mumbai, one of Asia's largest multi-venue arts and cultural centres, during the SOI's February and August series. In addition, he will advise the NCPA on matters of artistic strategy, orchestra development, and the choice of guest conductors, soloists and repertoire. His arrival in post, timed to coincide with the orchestra's twentieth anniversary, signals the SOI's determination to build on its existing artistic qualities and accelerate its development. This will run concurrently with his Chief Conductor position of the Malmö Symphony Orchestra, starting in Autumn 2025.

"It is a great joy and privilege for me to take on this role with the Symphony Orchestra of India," comments Martyn Brabbins. "We've already built a strong relationship through the performances we've given together in Mumbai and on tour. They are always warm, welcoming and so positive, and we've had some great musical experiences together. There's such a deep commitment from the management and the players. And it's wonderful to see how this multinational ensemble is reaching out to local musicians and nurturing the next generation of native-born players. The energy of bringing the artform to a new audience in India is part of the project's excitement and appeal. India holds such huge potential for developing audiences for symphonic music and the musicians to perform it. I am delighted to join the orchestra at such an exciting time in its history and look forward to being part of this wonderfully passionate and positive enterprise."

Brabbins' connection to the Symphony Orchestra of India arose from his friendship with the orchestra's founding Music Director, Marat Bisengaliev. They met in 1990 when performing in the Kazakh violinist's home city of Almaty and subsequently worked together after Bisengaliev moved to the UK. "Marat invited me to conduct the SOI in its early years, but the only available dates always clashed with other commitments. When I finally worked with them for the first time in 2016, we hit it off! We've worked together several times since, including for the orchestra's first UK tour five years ago. It's one of the most cosmopolitan groups of musicians I know, with players from so many nations and parts of the globe. That melting pot of talent, individual musicianship and ideas is very rich. It means that, from the conductor's perspective, you have to find fresh ways of drawing all of its parts together while retaining the culture and identity of what's already a very fine ensemble."

Khushroo N. Suntook looks forward to the SOI's development under its new Chief Conductor. "It gives us great pleasure to welcome Martyn Brabbins as Chief Conductor of the Symphony Orchestra of India. He has been Music Director of English National Opera and also helmed several orchestras throughout his remarkable career. In addition, he has trained promising students at venerable conservatories for a career in conducting. The SOI has worked with Martyn during its orchestral seasons in Mumbai and on tour in the UK, and we are delighted to strengthen this association. As the SOI prepares to mark the completion of twenty glorious years in 2026, we are certain that Martyn's guidance will pave the way for the orchestra to reach greater heights and for the NCPA to continue to curate world-class orchestral and operatic experiences in India and across the world."

Martyn Brabbins pays tribute to Khushroo N. Suntook, the Symphony Orchestra of India's co-founder and indefatigable Chairman. He praises his vision and personal drive, attributes that have played a critical part in the development of Mumbai's National Centre for the Performing Arts and the evolution of the SOI. "Khushroo is a remarkable man," notes the conductor. "His energy and dynamism have been crucial to developing the orchestra, the NCPA's thriving SOI Music Academy and western classical music in India. The element of bringing this artform to a new, clearly receptive audience is part of the excitement of this project for me and for all those involved with it."

For press enquiries, please contact:
Emma Curtis at Valerie Barber PR
Tel: +44 (0)20 7586 8560 / emma@vbpr.co.uk
www.vbpr.co.uk

We at Valerie Barber PR are committed to protecting your personal information and so we are letting you know that we are storing your email address, work telephone numbers and work postal address on our database so that we can keep you up to date with news on our clients. You can ask us to stop using your information at any time by emailing us at info@vbpr.co.uk. You may also request access to the personal data we have about you, request that any incorrect personal data we have about you be rectified, or request that we erase your personal data. If you have any questions about how we care for and use your personal information please let us know us at info@vbpr.co.uk.

Notes for Editors

The Symphony Orchestra of India (SOI), based at the National Centre for the Performing Arts (NCPA), Mumbai, was founded in 2006 by NCPA Chairman Khushroo N. Suntook and the acclaimed virtuoso violinist Marat Bisengaliev, who serves as the orchestra's Music Director. The SOI has worked with many distinguished guest conductors and soloists, Zubin Mehta, Yuri Simonov, Carlo Rizzi, Rafael Payare, Maria João Pires, Augustin Dumay, Simon O'Neill, Cédric Tiberghien, Alina Ibragimova, Stephen Hough and Barry Douglas among them.

During its forthcoming NCPA season, the SOI will give concerts under the direction of Zubin Mehta and Sir Mark Elder. Maestro Mehta's concerts will comprise two symphonic programmes (25 January & 1 February 2025) and an opera gala evening, including excerpts from Bizet's *Carmen* and Verdi's *La traviata* (7 & 9 February). Sir Mark will conduct the SOI in the Overture to Weber's *Oberon*, Robert Schumann's Overture, Scherzo and Finale, and Beethoven's Third Symphony, 'Eroica'.

The Symphony Orchestra of India has also served as the orchestra in the pit for several staged opera productions with traditional sets, together with concert performances, opera galas and programmes of choral works. Highlights include Tchaikovsky's *The Nutcracker* (2006), Puccini's *Tosca* (2010), Mascagni's *Cavalleria Rusticana* (2012), Leoncavallo's *Pagliacci* (2012), an Opera Gala (2015), Verdi's Requiem (2015), Puccini's *La bohème* (2017), Handel's *Messiah* (2018), Beethoven's Choral Fantasy and *Ah, perfido!* (2019), and Johann Strauss II's *Die Fledermaus* and Ferenc Erkel's *Bánk bán* (2022).

The Symphony Orchestra of India attracted international attention on 21 September when it served as accompanist for the finals of Operalia 2024. The global opera competition's gala event, staged at the National Centre for the Performing Arts, Mumbai, was conducted by its founder, Plácido Domingo, and Kemal Khan. This year's first prize winners were Kathleen O'Mara, soprano (USA), and Le Bu, bass-baritone (China).