



50th Anniversary of the Okanagan Symphony is Golden
Midsummer Magic Music and Wine Gala Celebration at Mission Hill Family Estate

West Kelowna, British Columbia (July 12, 2010) – The Okanagan Symphony is celebrating their 50th year with a gala benefit this weekend, July 17, 2010 at Mission Hill Family Estate winery. The most substantial fundraising activity for the OSO of the year, the evening regularly raises about \$80,000 annually of their \$800,000 budget. The largest performing arts organization in BC's interior, the funding helps support the approximately 50 musicians, a conductor, and guest artists.

Originally founded as a community orchestra, the OSO began as a fledgling group of 24 musicians who paid for the privilege of performing under the auspices of a night school class at Penticton High School in the autumn of 1959. With no live symphonic music available at that time between Vancouver and Calgary, a small group of amateur musicians would come together from the surrounding region with the resolute support of locals Hugh and Eva Cleland of Penticton and Wilbur and Mabel Hill of Westbank. Conductor William Bertsch would drive from Vancouver in his 1949 Austin camping along the way with his young wife for the weekend practices, with locals pitching in to help feed and house them all. The Orchestra's first concert performance included Gershwin's popular Rhapsody in Blue, along with selections from Beethoven, Tchaikovsky and Bach, which were performed in March 1960 in Kelowna, Penticton, Revelstoke and Vernon with a budget that year of only \$1625.

The upcoming OSO benefit is the first of an exciting season of cultural festivities at Mission Hill with the introduction of their **Reserve Concert Series**, which feature noted jazz artists and highly acclaimed Canadian operatic and symphony performers. The concerts afford a unique opportunity to enjoy a live performance in an unrivalled natural setting. The outdoor Greek style amphitheatre provides a stunning view of the Monashee Mountains and Lake Okanagan, sure to enchant audiences on a fine summer evening.



The Gala is one of the most sought after events of the season in the Valley, and this year, to celebrate the Okanagan Symphony's 50th anniversary, the theme of the evening is *The Glitter of Gold*. In the spirit of the celebration guests are encouraged to wear gold and a unique 'Glitter of Gold Reverse Draw' will offer a myriad of prizes, including a coveted 5 oz. gold bar.

"These challenging fiscal times have placed tremendous stress on the arts and we as a community need to support artistic organizations such as the OSO, which are an integral part of the cultural backbone of our society," says Anthony von Mandl, Proprietor, Mission Hill Family Estate. "Like great wine, great musicians are nurtured, valued and appreciated. The Okanagan Symphony's half-century of musical magic presents a historic event for the Valley that has been enriched by the talents, vision and cultural calling of those associated with this impressive company."

"With the recent deep cuts in government funding we are grateful to Mission Hill who supports this region and its arts with world-class flair and unflagging devotion," says Tim Watson, Acting General Manager, Okanagan Symphony. "We've come a long way since 1960 and this year's gala pays fitting tribute to our 50th Anniversary in a truly magical setting. We encourage music enthusiasts from around the Pacific Northwest to join us this weekend in helping lay the foundation for another successful half century."

Kick-off the festivities with a champagne toast, followed by a lovely reception on the winery's piazza. Winery Chef Matthew Batey will create golden gastronomy with his inspired cuisine du terroir paired with Mission Hill's award-winning wines. Dine alfresco, soaking up the beautiful Okanagan scenery while enjoying live musical interlude performances by Okanagan Symphony musicians. This year featuring brass and percussion – the Brass-tastics, along with special guest artists – Jazz singer, Anna Jacyszyn and world renowned Alphornist, Jim Hopson.

Highlights include a live and silent auction of collector wines donated by renowned Okanagan wineries and private cellars as well as a selection of luxurious travel packages, tantalizing food and Okanagan wine experiences, and dazzling works of art. The evening will be hosted by Rosemary Thomson, Music Director and Conductor of the Okanagan Symphony Orchestra and Terry David Mulligan, Television, Radio and Broadcast personality.

Of note, other concerts this summer at the winery include Grammy nominated musician **Wil Campa** and his 12 piece orchestra direct from Cuba, who will perform their unique blend of Afro-Cuban jazz music on August 7. Highly acclaimed by the *New York Times*, Wil has performed with Cuban legends Omara Portuondo and Ibrahim Ferrer (of Buena Vista Social Club) and with North American stars like Wynton Marsalis and Natalie Cole. In September, Juno award winning jazz guitarist **Jesse Cook** will look to repeat his previous 2008 sold out show at the winery on Labour Day Weekend. The finale to the season is a benefit concert on September 18 by the **Canadian Tenors** with their eclectic mix of classical and contemporary pop, in support of a Vancouver-based charity doing work in Africa. Special pre-concert dinner packages to celebrate the cultural festivities are available at the Terrace Restaurant, which offers guests breathtaking vistas of the vineyards and lake. Gourmet fare and Mission Hill's award winning wines will also be available. For more information please visit:

www.missionhillwinery.com/reserveconcertseries

About the Okanagan Symphony Orchestra

The Okanagan Symphony Orchestra (OSO) is the third largest professional Symphony Orchestra in British Columbia, and has entertained residents of the Okanagan Valley and visitors from around the globe with symphonic music since 1960. The OSO is dedicated to bringing the passion of symphonic music to life throughout the Okanagan, while educating, entertaining, and reaching out to all generations. Last year over 85% of the OSO's three-quarters of a million dollars budget was reinvested directly back into the community to the musicians, and spin-offs to Okanagan based businesses, restaurants, hotels and theatres. Visit www.okanagansymphony.com for more information.

About Mission Hill Family Estate

Mission Hill Family Estate is world renowned for its award-winning wines, stunning setting and architecture, and its Cuisine du Terroir-based Terrace Restaurant. The winery's vineyards are located in five distinct growing regions of British Columbia's Okanagan Valley. Reflective of the origin and unique character of the Valley and of the careful 'pruning to bottle' program, Oculus, our signature Bordeaux-inspired wine, represents the pinnacle in premium winemaking. Proprietor Anthony von Mandl and winemaker John Simes produce elegant internationally acclaimed wines with New World flavours and Old World refinement from this incomparable lakeside mountaintop winery. Visit www.missionhillwinery.com for more information.

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