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Asian Youth Orchestra

Fresh from a World Tour marking the 20th anniversary of the founding of the Hong Kong SAR, the award-winning Asian Youth Orchestra, recipient of Japan's Praemium Imperiale and Nikkei Asia Prize, is counted "amongst the finest youth orchestras around the world," (San Francisco Chronicle)

Selected annually through a strict audition process, the 100-plus orchestra members represent mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Indonesia, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. They are together for six weeks, initially for a three-week Rehearsal Camp in Hong Kong, then for a three-week international concert tour with celebrated conductors and solo artists.

Cellists Yo-Yo Ma, Steven Isserlis, Mischa Maisky, Wang Jian, Alban Gerhardt and Alisa Weilerstein, violinists Vadim Repin, Sarah Chang, Gidon Kremer, Gil Shaham, Elmar Oliveira, Young Uck Kim, Stefan Jackiw and Cho-Liang Lin, soprano Elly Ameling, the Beaux Arts Trio, pianists Alicia de Larrocha, Gerhard Oppitz, Cecile Licad and Leon Fleisher are among those who have performed with AYO under the direction of principal conductor James Judd, music director emeritus Sergiu Comissiona, Alexander Schneider, Tan Dun, and the orchestra's co-founders, Yehudi Menuhin and Richard Pontziou.

Since its inaugural performances in 1990, the award-winning Orchestra, which made its Lucerne Festival debut this year, has played over 400 concerts in Asia, Europe, the US and Australia to an audience of more than one million concertgoers. Millions more have seen and heard the orchestra around the world on CNN, CNBC, NHK and Radio and Television Hong Kong.

A staggering 25,000 musicians, ranging in age from 17 to 27, have auditioned for AYO. Those selected for the full scholarship program study with an exceptional artist-faculty of principals from the Baltimore, Boston, Minnesota and San Francisco symphony orchestras, the Bergamo Festival Orchestra (Italy), Milan's La Scala Opera, Rome Theater, La Fenice Teatro Venice, Teatro Carlo Felice Genoa, Brussels' Monnaie Opera, Leipzig's Gewandhaus Orchestra, the Orchestra Della Radio Svizzera Italiana, the Vienna Volksoper, the Triple Helix Trio and the Boston and Peabody music conservatories.

Playing to critical acclaim -- "Performs with Precision," Washington Post, "Educates and Exhilarates," Daily Californian and standing ovations in the finest European Summer Festivals and concert halls around the world, the Asian Youth Orchestra has played more concerts in more cities in China than any other orchestra based outside the mainland. AYO was the first international orchestra in 50 years to perform in Vietnam, premiered Tan Dun's *Symphony 1997* with cellist Yo-Yo Ma marking Hong Kong's reunification with China, has performed in the White House, at the United Nations, in New York's Avery Fisher Hall, the Hollywood Bowl, in the 7000-seat Wolf Trap Center, Amsterdam's

Concertgebouw, Berlin's Konzerthaus, Italy's Ravello and Merano festivals, the Sydney's Opera House, Prague's treasured Smetana Hall, Brussels' Palais des Beaux-Arts, and virtually every major concert hall across Japan and Southeast Asia.

A tuition-free cultural exchange summer program that involves Asia's brightest young musicians in exceptional opportunities for study and performance in an international environment, the Asian Youth Orchestra is designed to ignite a pride for what can be achieved by Asian musicians *in Asia*, while affecting a positive influence on the brain and talent drain that continues to frustrate all Asian nations.

The AYO is a tax-exempt non-profit organization qualified under Section 88 of the Hong Kong Inland Revenue Ordinance. Contributions from the United States are tax-exempt through Give2Asia.