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For Immediate Release

CONDUCTOR KENNETH WOODS TO MAKE LONDON DEBUT WITH NEW QUEEN'S HALL ORCHESTRA

NOVEMBER 4 GALA CONCERT MARKS ORCHESTRA'S RETURN TO ST. JOHN'S, SMITH SQUARE

American conductor Kenneth Woods will make his London debut on 4 November, conducting the New Queen's Hall Orchestra in a programme of Rossini, Walton and Beethoven, at St. John's Smith Square. The gala concert marks the orchestra's first return to the newly refurbished venue since their maiden concert in 1992.

In the NQHO, cellist and conductor Woods found a common philosophy and was drawn to the ensemble's approach and distinctive character of its sound achieved through the use of original instruments appropriate for the music performed. "It's hugely exciting to be conducting the NQHO on this gala concert, and to be part of the orchestra's continued evolution," remarks Woods. Founder and Artistic Director of the NQHO John Boyden is equally enthusiastic about the collaboration, commenting, "It is clear to me from his writings, discussions and performance values that Kenneth has a real insight into the individuality, the freedom of expression, and the imagination that drives the NQHO, which is why we are thrilled that he is conducting our gala concert on November 4th."

The programme opens with Rossini's light-hearted and comedic Overture to *Il Signor Bruschino*, followed by selections from Walton's *Façade*, narrated by male duo Kit and the Widow. Growing up in America where Walton's music is comparatively rarely performed, Woods was introduced to the composer's music as a teenager when he studied the Cello Concerto. He relishes the opportunity to explore another side to Walton's personality – his gift for wit and knack for working with popular music. The concert's main course is Beethoven's *Symphony No. 7*, a work Woods has conducted more than almost any other. A cellist with many years experience as a chamber musician, Woods' approach is influenced by his playing the string quartets, in which full-blown gusto is effortlessly complemented by textual clarity. "With the NQHO," Woods notes, "we can play Beethoven with real ferocity and abandon and know that the balance will still work."

This year Woods was appointed Principal Guest Conductor of the Orchestra of the Swan, and will make his first recording with that ensemble in November, of Schoenberg's chamber arrangements of Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde* and *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen*, for the Somm label. Woods has also guest conducted the BBC National Orchestra of Wales and Northern Sinfonia, with whom he made a critically acclaimed recording of works by Hans Gál for Avie (AV 2146), praised by Gramophone magazine for the conductor's "highly polished account".

In the US, Woods was Music Director of the Oregon East Symphony from 2000 – 09, during which time he transformed a small, remote orchestra into one of the most talked-about musical organisations in the Pacific Northwest, through his progressive programming and innovative outreach initiatives.

Woods is likewise gaining a considerable following for his candid and thoughtful writings and commentaries. Whether appearing on BBC Radio 4's Today programme or musing via a number of modern media outlets, particularly his blog [A View from the Podium](#), Woods has a growing reputation for combining musical insights with frank opinions about modern musical life.

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CONCERT INFORMATION

Thursday, 4 November – 7:30pm

The New Queen's Hall Orchestra

Kenneth Woods, conductor

Gala Fundraising Concert to Celebrate the Orchestra's Return to St. John's, Smith Square

Rossini Overture to *Il Signor Bruschino*

Walton Selections from *Façade* – Kit and the Widow, narrators

Beethoven Symphony No.7

NOTES TO EDITORS

Hailed by the Washington Post as a “true star” of the podium, conductor, rock guitarist, author and cellist **Kenneth Woods** has worked with many orchestras of international distinction including the National Symphony Orchestra (Washington D.C.), Cincinnati Symphony, BBC National Orchestra of Wales, Northern Sinfonia, Budapest Festival Orchestra and the State of Mexico Symphony Orchestra. He has also appeared at the world's leading music festivals, including Aspen, Lucerne, Round Top and Scotia. His work on the concert platform and in the recording studio has led to numerous broadcasts on BBC Radio 3, National Public Radio, and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.

In 2010, Kenneth Woods was appointed Principal Guest Conductor of Orchestra of the Swan, with whom he made his debut in the final concert of the Spring Sounds Festival. He will be active with the orchestra on stage and in the studio, starting with an all-Mahler CD for Somm Records in November of 2010. As music director of the Oregon East Symphony from 2000-9, he transformed a tiny orchestra in a remote, rural area into possibly the most talked-about orchestra in the Pacific Northwest, winning universal praise for their nationally celebrated “Redneck Mahler” cycle, progressive programming and their innovative youth programs. Other permanent affiliations include the Contemporary Music Ensemble of Wales (with whom he is often heard on BBC Radio 3), and the Rose City Chamber Orchestra.

Kenneth Woods made his commercial recording debut as a conductor for Avie Records with the Northern Sinfonia. The disc of world-premiere recordings of music by Austrian émigré composer Hans Gál has been hailed by The Strad, Classical Music, Classical CD Reviews and Musical Pointers for its “committed performances”, “first class” and “quick witted” playing, with Gramophone underlining Woods’ “highly polished account, with orchestral playing throughout most assured.” In June 2010, he was invited by the Stradivari Trust to conduct their 25th anniversary concert, featuring a string orchestra of many of the world's leading soloists and chamber musicians including Natalie Clein, Lawrence Power, Guy Johnston, Matthew Trussler and the Endellion and Fitzwilliam String Quartets. His blog, A View from the Podium, is one of the 25 most popular classical music blogs in the world.

Woods' unique gifts have been widely acknowledged early on by some of today's leading conductors. In the spring of 2001, he was selected by Leonard Slatkin as one of four participants in the National Conducting Institute at the Kennedy Center. At the completion of the Institute, he led the National Symphony Orchestra in a debut concert, drawing great critical acclaim. In the spring of 2000, David Zinman selected Woods from a pool of over 200 applicants to be a fellow in the inaugural class of the American Academy of Conducting at Aspen. Toronto Symphony Music Director Peter Oundjian has praised Woods as "a conductor with true vision and purpose. He has a most fluid and clear style and an excellent command on the podium... a most complete musician."

Kenneth Woods has conducted critically praised productions of operas from Britten to Puccini, and ballet scores as diverse as *Giselle*, the *Nutcracker* and *Firebird*. Woods' work as an active proponent of contemporary music includes collaborations with composers including John Corigliano, Krystof Penderecki, Peter Lieberson and Oliver Knussen.

In 2005, Woods was asked by the musicians of the Rose City Chamber Orchestra to found a new professional training institute for young conductors. In just four years under his leadership, the Rose City International Conductor's Workshop has become widely recognised as one of the leading training centers in the world for young conductors, drawing students from the world's leading conservatories and nations as diverse as Argentina, Japan, Korea, Germany, Spain, Israel, Mexico, Brazil, Russia and Canada. In 2009, the RCICW will be the subject of a major documentary on American television.

As a cellist he has been recipient of the Aspen Fellowship (Woods has received the Aspen Fellowship as both a cellist and conductor), the Dale Gilbert Award (the only musician to win this award in consecutive years), the Strelow Quartet Fellowship, the National Endowment for the Arts Rural Residency Grant, and has recorded and toured extensively as soloist and chamber musician. He has played chamber music with members of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, the Smithsonian Chamber Players, the Cincinnati, Chicago and Toronto symphonies, and the Minnesota, Gewandhaus and Concertgebouw orchestras. He was founding cellist of the National Endowment for the Arts-recognised Taliesin Trio, and of the Masala Quartet, who have recorded for *Vienna Modern Masters* and appeared at festivals and concert series in the US and Europe. He is currently cellist of the string trio [Ensemble Epomeo](#), with whom he performs regularly in the UK, Europe and the USA.

Mr. Woods pursued his advanced conducting studies as a fellowship student at the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music, and also studied at leading summer institutes and workshops around the world. He has studied conducting with Leonard Slatkin, David Zinman, Jorma Panula, and Gerhard Samuel, and has assisted James Conlon, Jesus Lopez-Cobos, Paavo Jarvi, Richard Hickox, Robert Spano, Tadaaki Otaka, Jiri Belohlavek and Peter Oundjian.