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CONTACT:

Jenine Baines

818.952.5544

jeninebaines@yahoo.com

CAL PHIL BLASTS OFF – PAST “THE PLANETS” TO A GALAXY FAR, FAR AWAY ON MAY 17...WITH HELP FROM JPL

Season finale at Ambassador Auditorium will feature John Williams *Star Wars*; a multimedia performance, featuring recent images of the planets captured by JPL spacecraft, of Holst’s *The Planets*; and the intergalactic premiere of composer-in-residence Roger Allen Ward’s *earth: you are here*

SAN MARINO, Calif. It’s often said that great music can transport listeners to a higher plane or another world; and, on Saturday, May 17, at 8 p.m. at the historic Ambassador Auditorium in Pasadena, the California Philharmonic will ensure that just that happens when it presents an evening of music that spans the cosmos – from here on Earth and our solar system to a galaxy far, far away. On the program are excerpts from John Williams’ classic film score *Star Wars*, Holst’s epic orchestral work *The Planets*, and the ‘intergalactic premiere’ of *earth: you are here*, written especially for this concert by Cal Phil composer-in-residence Roger Allen Ward.

“From time immemorial, the night sky has inspired humanity to reach for the stars,” says Cal Phil founder and Music Director, Dr. Victor Vener. “And this holds especially true for the composers whose works we’ll feature. For instance, Gustav Holst, who was a passionate devotee of astrology, once said that he only studied subjects that suggested music to him. And, now, his great orchestral work, *The Planets*, is the most-performed composition by an English composer.”

The suite was an instant success. “Legend has it that, at the first rehearsal of ‘Jupiter,’ the women cleaning the concert hall put down their mops and began dancing,” Vener adds.

To enhance the audience’s enjoyment and understanding of *The Planets*, Cal Phil has designed a multimedia production that will include recent photographs and moving images of the planets captured by spacecraft designed by Pasadena’s Jet Propulsion Laboratory for NASA.

“We’re not using a canned bunch of old slides or buying pre-fab visuals,” says David Kessler, Cal Phil production manager. “We’re taking advantage of the fact that we live here in Pasadena, with an institution – unquestionably the world leader in the exploration of the planets – generously willing to share with us brand new images their own scientists work with on a daily basis. What we’re *not* doing is turning *The Planets* into a soundtrack for a new slide show.”

Thomas Momary, a computer graphics and animation specialist at JPL, is the creator of many of the visuals that will be displayed during the concert. JPL is currently exploring many planets with new, surprising images and movies coming down virtually every day. Scientists are now studying them to uncover what they reveal about how the planets work, how they were formed and the prospect for life there – either presently or in the past.

Visuals provided by JPL include new images taken by JPL's Cassini Orbiter of Saturn, Martian landscapes provided by the rovers Spirit and Opportunity, storms raging on Jupiter and Venus, and shots of Saturn's largest moon, Titan, revealing very large lakes, some larger than Lake Superior on Earth made of liquid hydrocarbons that fell out of the Titanian skies over the aeons.

"There are some spectacular and bizarre phenomena going on out there on other worlds that scientists worldwide are having a great time trying to understand," says Vener.

Because *The Planets* was inspired by astrology rather than astronomy, there is no movement devoted to Earth. (By the time Pluto was discovered, the work was already so popular that Holst felt no need to compose a new movement for it – a foresighted choice considering that, in 2006, Pluto was declassified to a minor planet.) But Earth will not be neglected in this performance.

"In writing *earth: you are here*, I've had several jumping off points," says composer Roger Allen Ward, who includes Holst's *The Planets* among the works that inspired him to become a musician. "We are 'here' on Earth, looking out to celestial worlds beyond us...but we are also residents 'here' on *this* planet, surrounded by the miracle of life in all its strangeness and beauty. At the same time, we're in the midst of a human-made ecological crisis and a world riddled with wars, poverty and disease."

Ultimately, Ward concludes, what is most important is not how the planets may or may not rule our fortunes but how we choose to manage our own lives here on earth. "We humans have so much potential for greatness and have achieved so many incredible things," says Ward. "Yet we seem to be our own worst enemies, too."

The evening's program will conclude with excerpts from John Williams' popular soundtrack for the blockbuster film *Star Wars*...and not just because *Star Wars* is a work guaranteed to help fill an auditorium. "John Williams is a terrific composer," says Vener. "And I believe that *The Planets* more than likely had an influence on him when he wrote *Star Wars*, a great work which has become such a part of our pop culture. I'll be interested to hear after the performance whether the audience agrees with me."

In fact, Vener – who fully plans on sharing information about the composers, their works and the times they lived in not only during the pre-concert lecture at 7 p.m. but throughout the program – may very well ask the audience this question before the orchestra strikes the first notes of *Star Wars*.

“Cal Phil is continuing a tradition that has been a part of Pasadena since it was founded. With its many museums, galleries, orchestras and great institutions like Art Center and Caltech, we’ve long engaged in dialogs about the arts and sciences,” says Vener. “We look forward to future discussions and collaborations with organizations like JPL and Caltech for seasons to come.”

Tickets for Cal Phil’s performance of “The Planets” range from \$30 to \$95/person and are available by calling 626.300.8200 or online, at www.calphil.org. The box office, located at 1120 Huntington Drive in San Marino, is open Monday through Friday, from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. The Ambassador Auditorium is located at 131 South St. John Avenue in Pasadena.

Subscriptions for Cal Phil’s 2008-2009 winter season, which will take place at both the Ambassador Auditorium and the Pasadena Civic Auditorium, are now on sale. Tickets for the 2008 summer series *Festival on the Green* at the Los Angeles County Arboretum and Botanic Garden in Arcadia, California and at Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles, California are available as well. Call 626.300.8200 or visit www.calphil.org for more information.

In 1995, Music Director and Conductor Victor Vener and a small group of enthusiastic, dedicated music lovers based in Pasadena, California founded the The CalPhil Foundation. The Foundation, a nonprofit community benefit organization, supports the California Philharmonic in its quest to expand awareness of classical music, thus increasing the interest and support for great timeless music with wide audience appeal, from the classical and operatic repertoire to diverse genres of jazz, pops, Hollywood and Broadway. Also, with a strong commitment to new music and to expanding the symphonic repertoire, the California Philharmonic has presented numerous world premieres of both orchestral and chamber works.

The California Philharmonic began regular programming in 1997 with a five-concert inaugural summer season of Cal Phil Festival on the Green on the grounds of the Los Angeles County Arboretum & Botanic Garden in Arcadia. Now, Cal Phil presents twenty-four concerts per year in five different, but equally impressive, venues throughout Los Angeles County. These series include Cal Phil at Walt Disney Concert Hall (downtown Los Angeles), Cal Phil at the Ambassador (Pasadena), Cal Phil Music, Martinis and the Maestro (Green Hotel in Pasadena) and Cal Phil at The Mill (The Old Mill in San Marino). For more information, visit www.calphil.org or call 626.300.8200.

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