



## RUSSIA, HERE WE COME – BUT ONLY KIDS ALOUD

### ***Wales Millennium Centre/Only Kids Aloud Chorus prepares for a trip to Russia at the invitation of Valery Gergiev***

Mahler's Symphony No 8 'Symphony of a Thousand'

**Only Kids Aloud** is a new children's choir still in the making, created especially for a monumental one-off performance on the Donald Gordon Stage at the Wales Millennium Centre this spring with the world-renowned conductor Valery Gergiev and his Mariinsky Opera company. It has just been announced that these 85 children, aged between nine and 13, are to travel to Russia, at the personal invitation of the maestro, to perform in St Petersburg, representing a very special opportunity prior to their UK debut. The choir will now perform Mahler's Symphony No 8, 'Symphony of a Thousand' on both stages; in Russia on 23 March and Wales on 1 April.

Only Kids Aloud was recruited as part of a joint venture by Wales Millennium Centre and *Only Men Aloud's* Musical Director, Tim Rhys Evans, who scoured every corner of the country last year to find very best of young Welsh talent from all backgrounds. Over 300 children auditioned and 85 were chosen (the original quota was to find 60). Rehearsals in various parts of the country began earlier this year, but it was only during this last weekend's rehearsals that the children were told the news of the Russian venture.

Conrad Lynch, Artistic Director at Wales Millennium Centre says, "In 2008 we signed a five year strategic partnership with the Mariinsky Theatre to develop a meaningful and a unique partnership which would help nurture future generations of artistic talent, both at home and in Russia. We aimed to focus on collaborating on creative and artistic projects and I'm delighted that we can now offer an unforgettable opportunity for the Wales Millennium Centre / Only Kids Aloud Chorus which will give these children from the across the country an opportunity to be part of something very special."

Speaking earlier this month, Maestro Gergiev said "I hope this will be an event they (the children) will always remember and that it will influence their lives. They will, I hope, hear certain sounds and a mysterious sonority around them that will be an important discovery for them."

Tim Rhys Evans says, "The news that we're going to Russia is incredible! I've always been so excited for the children that they'll be working with Valery Gergiev. But now, to be doing that in his world-class theatre in the cultural hub of St. Petersburg, is phenomenal. The children are very excited to be going on this trip but I think it will be some years down the line, when they look back at this opportunity, that it's true value will be realised.... The performance in Cardiff of Mahler's great symphony - and now in St Petersburg as well - will be memories that these young, talented

and energetic Welsh kids will take with them through the rest of their lives and it's a privilege to be part of making it happen".

Christanne Forrest from Swansea, a parent of one of the children said, "My son Ewan has a disability which means that he is very limited on what physical activity he can do. Luckily he loves to sing. When he was first accepted to be a part of the choir he was ecstatic. Although, he spends a lot of his life in a wheelchair, Ewan is adamant that nothing will stop him from going to Russia. He wants to join his friends on this trip of a lifetime and is looking forward to sharing the experience with his father, who will accompany him".

**The Mariinsky Opera will perform Wagner's Parsifal on Saturday 31 March and Mahler's Symphony No 8 'Symphony of a Thousand' on Sunday 1st April 2012, when they will also be joined by the BBC National Chorus of Wales. Both concerts are at 4pm. For tickets and further information visit [www.wmc.org](http://www.wmc.org)**

#### EDITORS NOTES

- A five-year international strategic partnership between the Centre and the Mariinsky Theatre was established in January 2009 with the aim of bringing regular performances by the Mariinsky Orchestra and Ballet to the Centre, as well as the sharing and exchange of creative skills.
- The Mariinsky Ballet [formerly the Kirov Ballet] was the first ballet company to perform at the Centre in 2005 (two of their soloists also performed during the Royal Gala that opened the Centre). The opera company first performed here in 2006 with the UK premiere of The Ring Cycle. They also gave three concert performances as part of our 5th birthday celebrations with Bryn Terfel as guest soloist.
- Mariinsky UK Tour is supported by BP.
- Wales Millennium Centre is an iconic arts venue and a cultural destination for performers and audiences in Wales and beyond. The Centre is a registered charity and provides a creative home to eight of Wales's leading arts and cultural organisations.
- For further information about Wales Millennium Centre please visit: [www.wmc.org.uk](http://www.wmc.org.uk). The Centre's news releases can be found at: [www.wmc.org.uk/press](http://www.wmc.org.uk/press)

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PICTURES ATTACHED OF ONLY KIDS ALOUD AND TIM RHYS EVANS

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