

# CLASSICAL DESTINATIONS

*An armchair guide to classical music*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **SIMON CALLOW FOLLOWS AMADEUS TO SALZBURG: Acclaimed Actor Hosts Musical Grand Tour in New Television Documentary Series**

Celebrated British actor **Simon Callow** presents **CLASSICAL DESTINATIONS**, a new thirteen-part x 26 minute television series that takes viewers on a musical grand tour around Europe. A stunning soundtrack of classical music's greatest works, played by the world's major orchestras and soloists, accompanies stories of the composers' lives told in the spectacular cities and landscapes in which they lived.

Callow begins his journey in Mozart's birthplace of Salzburg, describing the city's antique splendour and reflecting on how the wunderkind's music was affected by the place in which he spent much of his short life. It's a happy reunion for Callow and Mozart – the actor portrayed the composer in Peter Shaffer's famous play *Amadeus* when it premiered at the National Theatre in 1979. Five years later he appeared as the impresario Schikaneder when *Amadeus* became the Academy Award-winning film.

Salzburg is only the first stop in the series, which is a modern-day equivalent of the age-old cultural Grand Tour – a scenic and sonic parade that is both extravagantly beautiful and deeply moving.

Callow's path leads through much of Europe: the fjords of Norway with the music of Grieg; Finland's primeval forests and Sibelius; the Venice of Vivaldi; Puccini's villa on the Torre del Lago in Tuscany; the travels of J.S. Bach through eastern Germany; Beethoven's birth city of Bonn; the Prague of Smetana and Dvořák; Tchaikovsky's St Petersburg – and much more.



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Seeing the world through the composers' eyes was a revelation for Callow. "It is inconceivable that Mozart, Beethoven, Brahms and others would not have responded viscerally to their surroundings," he says. "Equally, one can learn a great deal about cities and countries by listening to the music written there. It's two-way traffic."

Threaded through the vivid High Definition footage is a compendium of life's triumphs, failures and peccadilloes. Mozart's early death, Beethoven's deafness, Puccini's fondness for hunting, and Mahler's battles with the conservative establishment of Vienna while he directed the Opera are all recounted by Callow with his idiosyncratic mix of authority and charm.

Callow is joined in his storytelling by the 23 year-old violin virtuoso **Niki Vasilakis** – who performs on location throughout the series as well as the TV Theme – and her Antipodean colleague **Matt Wills**.

Perhaps the most powerful ingredient in the programmes is the music, performed by the world's most distinguished artists and orchestras courtesy of the Decca Music Group in London, who will release the **CLASSICAL DESTINATIONS** soundtrack on CD and DVD. "We're delighted to have contributed," says Decca Music Group president **Costa Pilavachi**. "The combination of the stories of the great composers with musical treasures from the Decca and Philips catalogues in each of the thirteen beautifully filmed episodes will undoubtedly bring the pleasures of travel and classical music to a much wider audience."

**CLASSICAL DESTINATIONS** is produced and directed by **Peter Beveridge** for Bredon Hill Film and TV Productions, and will premiere, prime time January 2006 on Australia's national SBS network.

**International TV sales and distribution is by  
BBC Worldwide.**

**Companion illustrated hardcover book published by  
Penguin**

**Decca companion double CD and DVD distributed by  
Universal Music**

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