



THE ROADS OF FRIENDSHIP RAVENNA-TEHRAN

A bridge of brotherhood through art and culture

TEHRAN - Thursday 6 July, Vahdat Hall at 7pm

RAVENNA - Saturday 8 July Palazzo Mauro De André at 9pm

RICCARDO MUTI conductor

Luigi Cherubini Youth Orchestra

Musicians from the major Italian Theatres

Tehran Symphony Orchestra and Choir

Chorus of the Municipal Theatre, Piacenza

Tenor - Piero Pretti

Baritone - Luigi Salsi

Bass - Riccardo Zanellato

On July 6 and 8, over 200 Italian and Iranian musicians will make history with two concerts, performing together on stage in Tehran and Ravenna led by Italian cultural ambassador, Riccardo Muti. The project, instigated and curated by the **Ravenna Festival** in collaboration with the Roudaki Foundation, Tehran, celebrates 20 years of "**The Roads of Friendship**" - an annual lay pilgrimage, re-establishing ancient ties to places of historical importance.

Joining Riccardo Muti on stage in both Tehran and Ravenna are the Luigi Cherubini Youth Orchestra, musicians from Italy's major theatres, the chorus of Piacenza's Municipal Theatre and members of the Tehran Symphony Orchestra and Choir. The programme is dedicated to highlights from Verdi's operas with Italian soloists Piero Pretti, Luca Salsi and Riccardo Zanellato.

This significant occasion comes to light less than two years after the re-birth of the Tehran Symphony Orchestra - whose eight-decade history has accompanied the events of the Country - and is the first international collaboration of Iranian and Western orchestras.

For further press information please contact:

Red House Productions - lucy@redhousepr.com - Tel: + 46 - (0)70 - 38 80 255



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Following three days of rehearsals in Tehran, the first concert will take place on July 6 in the elegant Vahdat Hall, home to the Roudaki Foundation. Following their return to Europe, the Italian musicians will host their Iranian counterparts for the second concert on July 8 at Ravenna's 4000 seater concert hall - the Palazzo Mauro de André - and the event will be filmed for international broadcast by RAI TV.

In advance of travelling to Iran, Riccardo Muti commented "*Better than economy, better than politics, better than verbal languages, music can provide direct communication, tugging at the heartstrings with no need for mediation. And this leads to the concerts of the 'Road of Friendship' programme, to the heart of their very reason for being.*"

Home to eight UNESCO World Heritage sites, Ravenna has historically been a crossroads of people and culture - the gateway between the East and West. "The Roads of Friendship" was created with the city's history in mind and the annual event is core to the 2 month long Ravenna Festival. Following the project's first symbolic pilgrimage to Sarajevo in 1997, the Ravenna Festival and Riccardo Muti have collaborated with musicians in cities across the world including Beirut, Jerusalem, Moscow, Istanbul, New York (Ground Zero), Cairo, Damascus, El Djem, Meknès, Nairobi and Tokyo.

Both concerts in Tehran and Ravenna have been made possible with the support of the Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Environmental Conservation, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, the Emilia-Romagna Region, the Italian Embassy in Tehran and the Embassy and Cultural Institute of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Italy.