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link to High res. Pictures of Blake and Cortes:

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/9oe67k1i4umj0ut/blake-cortes-elements%20%281%29.zip>

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For the first time ever, the renowned Johannesburg Philharmonic Orchestra heads east to the Palace of Dreams , Emperors Palace!

On June 27th and 28th 2014 the Brit Award winning and nominated, **BLAKE** joined by popular opera star **CORTES**-four of the most gifted male vocalists in the world will come together to bring two concerts combining the very best of Opera, classical, musicals and pop harmony. Some of the best loved classical cross over music ever written, masterfully arranged and expertly performed, to create a magical evening. Mixing pop, rock and classical anthems with rich harmony vocals, British 'boyband' **BLAKE** launched their first album in 2007. The public embraced their debut album immediately, with over 100,000 copies being sold in just three weeks and earning the group their first Gold Disc. The music industry followed in early 2008, when the album received the prestigious Brit-Award for Album of the Year, a huge honour for a group still less than a year old.

Since that time their music has achieved remarkable success. Their upbeat version of 'Swing Low' was chosen as the Official Anthem of England Rugby for the 2007 Rugby World Cup. In 2008 their highly anticipated 2nd album, And So It Goes was released and went straight in at number 12 in the UK pop charts and Number 1 in several classical charts around the world.

Joining **BLAKE** on their debut South African Tour, is the 'James Bond' of classical music, **CORTES** an Icelandic tenor who was born into a musical family and trained as a singer in Vienna, Copenhagen and London. He has performed various leading tenor roles in operas, as well as a leading part in The Phantom of the Opera in London's West End. His debut album in the UK, titled Cortes, was released on 16 April 2007 and entered the UK classical chart at number 1.

Gauteng's flag ship Orchestra, The Johannesburg Philharmonic Orchestra, will accompany **BLAKE** and **CORTES** for this stellar line up of the finest of classic crossover singers in the world.

Performances are on the 27th and 28th June 2014 at 20:00 at the Theatre of Marcellus at Emperors Palace. Emperors Palace is a Peermont resort. For Further information visit www.emperorspalace.com or contact +27119281000.

Like us on Facebook or follow us on Twitter: @emperorspalace.

Booking is open at Computicket.

ABOUT EMPERORS PALACE

Conveniently located alongside O.R. Tambo International Airport in Johannesburg, South Africa, with regular complimentary shuttles and now on the new Gautrain bus route directly to and from Rhodesfield Station, the Emperors Palace Hotel Casino Convention and Entertainment Resort is the Vegas of Africa.

This mega resort combines the timeless classical elegance of a bygone era with the sheer excitement of a modern casino resort to offer luxurious accommodation in four unique hotels, a glorious health and beauty spa, a magnificent casino with unparalleled gaming enjoyment, the finest in dining options, spectacular entertainment choices and a state-of-the-art cinema complex, world-class conference facilities, and impeccable service.

ABOUT BLAKE

Blake has also gained a celebrity following with high-profile fans that include the British Royal Family, Prince Albert and Princess Charlene of Monaco, Kiera Knightley, Will Smith, Ewan McGregor, Kevin Spacey, Morgan Freeman and even Dame Shirley Bassey, who celebrated her \$1Million 70th birthday party, with the Blake boys giving a very special performance.

The group had been riding a crest of the wave , enjoying their busiest years yet, with over 90 live concert appearances including their first tour of China, singing in the Olympic Stadium, and further tours of The Phillipines, Russia and the US. Their first trip to China took in indoor stadium concerts in Shanghai, Beijing and TianJin whilst their first live TV appearance was to 350 million viewers as the headline international act at the Shanghai International Film Festival, a massive honour.

In 2013, Blake continued with their sellout tours of Europe, The Phillipines and an in early 2014, made their New York Debut at the legendary Cafe Carilse in New York City. Blake were proud supporters and sang the theme song for the much publicised trek by Prince Harry, To the Antartica to raise funds and awareness for "Walking with the Wounded".

With over one and half a million albums sold internationally, and having performed on nearly 160 TV shows around the world, Blake continue to build their reputation as one of the most eclectic and exciting harmony groups in the world. Joining BLAKE on their debut South African Tour,

<http://www.blakeofficial.com>

ABOUT CORTES

Described as 'the James Bond of Classical Music', Gardar Thor Cortes, who hails from Iceland, had phenomenal success with a British number one album called Cortes, sell-out tours and a Classical Brit Award nomination in 2008. Having taken 4 years out to focus on his then new-born son and family, he is now ready to take the recording and performing world by storm again with two albums in development - one crossover and the other classical.

Gardar Thor Cortes studies began at an early age at the Reykjavik School of Singing. Furthering his career, he attended the Hochschule für Darstellende Kunst and Musik in Vienna, had private lessons in New York and Copenhagen and took the two year opera course at the Royal Academy of Music in London. His teachers have included David Maxwell Anderson, Stuart Burrows, Paul Farrington, Paul Wynne Griffiths, David Jones, KiriTeKanawa, Andre Orlowitz, Robin Stapleton and Michael Rhodes and his versatile voice has enabled him to sing and have success in a wide variety of music - opera, oratorio, lieder, musicals, contemporary music and jazz.

Gardar has sung the major opera roles of Ferrando (Cosi fan tutte), Fenton (Falstaff), Afredo (La Traviata), Rinuccio (Gianna Schicchi), Italian singer (Der Rosenkavalier), Vakula (Cherevichki), Chanfalla (Das Wundertheater), Il Duca (Rigoletto), Don Ramiro (La Cenerentola) and Nemorino (L'elisird'amore) with his latest two roles being Tamino (Die Zauberflöte) and Rodolfo (La Boheme) at the Icelandic Opera. Future engagements include Don Jose (Carmen) for the Icelandic Opera in 2013.

Having been nominated for the Icelandic Music Awards and the Icelandic Performing Arts Awards for his opera roles numerous times as well as being voted sexiest man in Iceland not once but twice, his singing engagements have taken him to Scandinavia, Europe, USA and Asia and the prestigious venues of the Barbican, Royal Albert Hall and Royal Festival Hall in London and Carnegie Hall in New York. He sang at one of the BBC's top featured events; the Proms in the Park in front of 40,000 people, broadcast live to millions of people, and has taken part in a number of their other entertainment programmes. He has toured with Katherine Jenkins, KiriTeKanawa and Lesley Garrett.

Gardar has released albums, classical and crossover in both in his native Iceland and the UK, Germany, Austria, and Switzerland reaching number 1 in the charts in South Africa and Taiwan. In 2011 he recorded an album of duets with his father Gardar Cortes Snr. Entitled 'Island' which has received great critical acclaim.

His appearances in musicals have included Curly (Oklahoma), Tony (West Side Story), and Raoul in Phantom of the Opera at Her Majesty's Theatre in the West End of London. In 2011 Gardar took part in 25th Anniversary of the Phantom of the Opera at Royal Albert Hall, a production that was broadcast live to cinemas across the globe and released on DVD. After ending 2012 with an unusual sell-out performance of Mozart's Requiem at Langholtskirkjain Iceland with symphony orchestra and choir on the 4th/5th December at the exact time of Mozart's passing and a New Years Eve concert at the beautiful Icelandic Church Grafarvogskirkja which produced come magic moments, 2013 is now proving to be the year of Thor Cortes's second and true coming.

www.gardarthorcortes.com

ABOUT THE JOHANNESBURG PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

Formed by a group of committed, resilient musicians, the Johannesburg Philharmonic Orchestra (JPO) was established in May 2000 following the demise of the National Symphony Orchestra. The year 2010 marks the tenth year of the JPO's existence, and we can proudly look back on a decade of great achievements.

Our persistence and commitment to consistent high standards of performance, as well as music education and development, was rewarded when the National Lottery Distribution Trust Fund gave us a substantial funding boost over three years, starting in 2009.

The JPO strives to be nationally and internationally recognised as South Africa's leading philharmonic orchestra, performing music that incorporates the greatest accomplishments of classical and South African music genres.

Vision: "World-class music for a world-class city"

The JPO seeks to ensure the ongoing sustainability and growth of music traditions through nurturing accessibility to the broad community. The JPO aims to perform consistently at an international level of musical excellence.

The JPO aims to challenge the prevailing perception of classical music performances being elitist and Euro-centric, and appeal rather to a truly egalitarian local audience.

Past achievements and activities

During 2000, the JPO utilised its own scant financial resources to present 15 concerts that included three overseas guest conductors as well as world-renowned overseas artists.

Since its inception, the JPO has presented four symphony seasons every year of symphonic music, mostly with the assistance of corporate sponsorship and individual donations and ticket sales.

In 2004, the JPO released an internationally acclaimed, world-premiere recording of the Samuel Coleridge-Taylor Violin Concerto.

The JPO commissioned and, in March 2004, performed the world-premiere of 'A Mandela Portrait' in recognition of the 10 years of democracy in South Africa. The

work was then recorded and broadcast on 1 December 2004 - World Aids Day - on SABC 2.

In addition to its symphony concerts, the JPO has performed:

'Queen: the Concert'

'The Joburg Pops'

'La Traviata' and 'La Boheme' for Opera Africa

'Carmina Burana' for the German Government's celebration of 10 years of democracy

Fauré's 'Requiem' for RAU.

In 2007, the JPO became a full-time orchestra with permanent musicians on yearly contracts.

2009 saw the JPO perform for the Inauguration of President Zuma at the Union Buildings

In 2009, the JPO was awarded funding for a three-year period by the National Lottery Distribution Trust Fund.

In 2009 the JPO provided the recordings for the opening and closing ceremonies for the FIFA Confederations Cup

In 2010 the JPO was asked once again to record for the FIFA World Cup opening and Closing ceremonies

In 2010, the JPO celebrated its 10th birthday. Reaching this significant milestone was made possible by a small band of dedicated men and women who are passionate about seeing classical music not only survive, but thrive, in Gauteng.

www.jpo.co.za