
For immediate release
Alan Gilbert's June Concerts with NY Philharmonic

Contact Glenn Petry (212) 625-2038
gpetry@21cmediagroup.com

Final Three Weeks of Alan Gilbert's Inaugural Season as Music Director of New York Philharmonic Feature Three June Programs Including Performances by Gilbert as Violist in Brahms's String Sextet No. 2 (June 12), and Beethoven's Monumental *Missa Solemnis*, Paired with World Premiere of *Al largo* by Magnus Lindberg (June 23-26)

Gilbert's Recent Performances of Ligeti's *Le Grand Macabre* Unanimously Well-Received – Hailed “An Instant Philharmonic Milestone” by *New York Times*

Following a trio of triumphant sold-out performances of György Ligeti's opera, *Le Grand Macabre*, Alan Gilbert turns to the final concerts of his inaugural season as Music Director of the New York Philharmonic. Highlights of his three upcoming programs at Avery Fisher Hall are an appearance by Gilbert as violist in Brahms's Sextet No. 2 with musicians of the New York Philharmonic (June 12 at 2pm), and season-ending performances of Beethoven's monumental *Missa Solemnis*, paired with the world premiere of *Al largo*, a new work by Magnus Lindberg – the orchestra's Marie-Josée Kravis Composer-in-Residence – commissioned by the New York Philharmonic (June 23, 24, and 26). Detailed information on each program, including an additional concert by Gilbert and the Philharmonic at Newark's NJPAC, follows below.

The first program (June 10-12 and 15) pairs music by two Finns – Sibelius and Lindberg – along with Brahms's ebullient Symphony No. 2. Lisa Batiashvili will be the soloist in Sibelius's Violin Concerto, and Gilbert will also conduct Lindberg's 1995 work *Arena*, which the conductor describes as “an amazing tour-de-force for the orchestra.” Brahms's Second Symphony will also be heard on the Saturday Matinee on June 12, which will feature Gilbert as one of the two violists in Brahms's String Sextet No. 2. Gilbert has performed chamber music with members of the orchestra many times, including at an earlier Saturday Matinee concert this season.

In the second program (June 17-19), Gilbert will lead the orchestra in Wagner's *Siegfried Idyll*; H.K. Gruber's trumpet concerto *Aerial*; Mozart's Symphony No. 25; and Wagner's Prelude and “Liebestod” from *Tristan und Isolde*. Joining the orchestra for *Aerial* is Swedish trumpet virtuoso Hakan Hardenberger, for whom the work was written, and who is making his New York Philharmonic debut. Gilbert calls *Aerial* “phenomenally difficult for the trumpet and incredibly fun to listen to.”

Three concerts at Avery Fisher Hall (June 23, 24, and 26) end the season in suitably grand and celebratory fashion. The program features *Al largo*, a world-premiere New York Philharmonic commission by Magnus Lindberg, paired with Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis*. Along with Ligeti's

opera, *Le Grand Macabre*, Gilbert has long considered this famously challenging work by Beethoven as one of the touchstones of his inaugural season. Few works for chorus and orchestra impose as many technical and physical demands on its performers, especially to the massed singers, who sing for much of the work's approximately 80-minute duration. Bass Eric Owens, whose lead performance as Nekrotzar in the Philharmonic's staging of the Ligeti opera was so widely hailed, returns as one of the four soloists in the *Missa Solemnis*.

Gilbert, when asked recently by John Schaefer, the host of WNYC's "Soundcheck" program, to sum up his feelings as he began the final weeks of his inaugural season as the Philharmonic's music director, described what was perhaps his biggest surprise: "Despite all of the pressures that went along with taking on such an important new position, I have managed to enjoy myself tremendously along the way." No doubt the critical and audience reaction to the Ligeti production – three sold-out performances, long and loud standing ovations, and a chorus of positive reviews – has given Gilbert special reason to smile as critics and audiences consider the impact of his first season and the promise of things to come. Gilbert's complete interview with Schaefer is available here: tinyurl.com/284zzmg.

A sampling of the critical reaction to *Le Grand Macabre* follows.

Critical acclaim for *Le Grand Macabre*:

"Led by its quietly revolutionary new music director Alan Gilbert, the orchestra performed the semi-staged production to a sellout crowd that evidently relished the opera's flamboyant unconventionality, the insanely high caliber of the performance, and the evidence of a cultural institution that has shed its stodgy past. It was a marvelous night for New York."

– *New York* [Justin Davidson]

"The hero of this production, of the whole endeavor, is Mr. Gilbert, who conducted the score with insight, character, and command. The Philharmonic players seemed inspired as they executed this complex music with skill and conviction. Mr. Gilbert brought out Ligeti's wildness. Yet moment after moment was ravishing, like the fractured, hazy, strangely elusive scene when Piet, Astradamors, and Nekrotzar drink themselves into a stupor, which causes Nekrotzar to bungle his chance to destroy the world. ...[A]n instant Philharmonic milestone."

– *New York Times* [Anthony Tommasini]

"An event that may signify several important cultural turning points. The clangorous, atonal music, which used lots of nonmusical instruments, such as car horns and ringing phones, played to a sold-out house, two thirds of which wasn't regular subscribers. Not just a marketing triumph, the production ended with a rock-concert roar. The project initially seemed like an Alan Gilbert death wish; instead, the Philharmonic's still-fledgling music director stands to have his profile raised considerably by *Macabre*."

– *Philadelphia Inquirer* [David Patrick Stearns]

"Mr. Gilbert put the whole thing across with tremendous control, navigating the opera's complexity to convey its humor and, remarkably, beauty. Even with – or perhaps because of – the semi-staged production, the opera was more persuasive than it was in a fully-staged version in San Francisco in 2004. There, it seemed gimmicky and soulless; here, performed with musical virtuosity in a visual environment that deftly balanced the serious and the comic, it was fun."

– *Wall Street Journal* [Heidi Waleson]

"Surely the presiding force that made the evening so seamless and exciting was Gilbert on the podium."

Pacing, instrumental gesture, textural richness, hair-trigger coordination of every complex element – it was all there, along with a thrilling take-no-prisoners musical exuberance that other performances of *Le Grand Macabre* I've heard never quite duplicated. Suddenly the New York Philharmonic's future looks very bright indeed."

– *Musical America* [Peter G. Davis]

"The end of the world was on the program Thursday night – but for the New York Philharmonic, performing the apocalyptic opera *Le Grand Macabre* was a promising new beginning. Hungarian composer György Ligeti's dissonant, absurdist 1978 opera is one of the most popular modern works in Europe, but it's never played New York until now. The overdue premiere won a warm reception when the sold-out crowd at Avery Fisher Hall rose to cheer both the work and the performers."

– *New York Post* [James Jorden]

Alan Gilbert – June Concerts with the New York Philharmonic

June 10-12 and 15
New York Philharmonic
Avery Fisher Hall (New York, NY)
Lindberg: *Arena*
Sibelius: Violin Concerto (Lisa Batiashvili, violin)
Brahms: Symphony No. 2

June 12
New York Philharmonic
Saturday Matinee
Avery Fisher Hall (New York, NY)
Brahms: String Sextet No. 2 (Sheryl Staples, violin; Lisa Kim, violin; Cynthia Phelps, viola; Alan Gilbert, viola; Carter Brey, cello; Eileen Moon, cello)
Brahms: Symphony No. 2

June 17-19
New York Philharmonic
Avery Fisher Hall (New York, NY)
Wagner: *Siegfried Idyll*
H.K. Gruber: *Aerial* (Hakan Hardenberger, trumpet)
Mozart: Symphony No. 25
Wagner: *Tristan und Isolde*: Prelude and "Liebestod"

June 23, 24, and 26
New York Philharmonic
Avery Fisher Hall (New York, NY)
Lindberg: *Al largo*
Beethoven: *Missa Solemnis* (Christine Brewer, soprano; Jane Henschel, mezzo-soprano; Anthony Dean Griffey, tenor; Eric Owens, bass-baritone; New York Choral Artists; Joseph Flummerfelt, director)

June 25
New York Philharmonic
New Jersey Performing Arts Center (Newark, NJ)
Beethoven: *Missa Solemnis* (Christine Brewer, soprano; Jane Henschel, mezzo-soprano; Anthony Dean Griffey, tenor; Eric Owens, bass-baritone; New York Choral Artists; Joseph Flummerfelt, director)

www.alangilbert.com

#

© 21C Media Group, June 2010