

For immediate release
Alan Gilbert takes NY Phil to Europe for spring tour

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Alan Gilbert Takes NY Philharmonic on European Tour, May 12 – 24, Making His First Appearances as Music Director in Nine Cities

Alan Gilbert leads the **New York Philharmonic** on its **EUROPE / SPRING 2011** tour, May 12 - 24, 2011. This tour — the fourth with Gilbert as Music Director — will take the Philharmonic to the music capitals of Central Europe, with eleven concerts in nine cities: Basel, Switzerland; Baden-Baden and Munich, Germany; Vienna, Austria; Budapest, Hungary; Berlin, Dresden, and Leipzig, Germany; and Prague, Czech Republic. Although Gilbert has a long history of conducting concerts across Europe – his most recent performances there were with the Berlin Philharmonic in early April – and has taken the New York Philharmonic on two previous European tours, this excursion marks his first appearances in all nine cities as Music Director of the orchestra.

Continuing the New York Philharmonic's multi-year focus on the rich legacy of former Music Director Gustav Mahler, Gilbert will conduct an all-Mahler program at Vienna's Musikverein on May 15, three days before the 100th anniversary of the great composer-conductor's death. (The 2010 – 2011 season also marks the 100th anniversary of Mahler's final New York Philharmonic season and the 150th anniversary of his birth.) The program includes two pillars of the orchestral repertoire: Mahler's *Kindertotenlieder*, featuring baritone Thomas Hampson — one of the great exponents of this work, and a decades-long champion of Mahler — and the Symphony No. 5, which will be performed five times throughout the tour. In addition to the May 15 performance in Vienna, Hampson will also appear in Basel, Baden-Baden, Berlin, Dresden, and Leipzig. Violinist Lisa Batiashvili will perform works by Bartók and Sibelius with the Philharmonic in Munich, Vienna, Budapest, Dresden, and Prague.

Gilbert and the New York Philharmonic recently played Mahler's Symphony No. 5 in New York to enthusiastic, sold-out houses and critical acclaim. Anthony Tommasini reported in the *New York Times*:

In the first movement, a funeral march, [Gilbert] took a daringly restrained tempo, creating intensity through emphatic execution and heaving, heavy power. In the wild *Scherzo*, he conveyed the music's rustic boisterousness while effectively setting up the strangely pensive passages that periodically interrupt the activity. He drew glowing string sound from the Philharmonic in the sublime *Adagietto*, and brought shape and steady flow to the *Rondo-Finale*, with its long stretches of scrambled counterpoint.

EUROPE / SPRING 2011 is the Philharmonic's third tour of Europe under the leadership of Gilbert, following the acclaimed EUROPE / AUTUMN 2010 tour this past October and November, and the February EUROPE / WINTER 2010 tour.

In the Q & A below, Alan Gilbert discusses the upcoming tour, as well as some of the concerts he will give in New York during the remainder of the current season.

A Conversation with Alan Gilbert

Q: It must be exciting, after hearing the New York audience's reaction to your Mahler 5 with the New York Philharmonic, to know that you'll be taking that piece to Europe on your upcoming tour.

AG: I've heard the New York Philharmonic play the Mahler 5 dozens of times, and it's something I've looked forward to doing for a long time. To be able to conduct it in New York has been an incredible thrill. I think the orchestra is playing absolutely brilliantly, and I felt that we really made a great connection together - and with the audience - with our recent Mahler performances.

Q: There will be two artists on the tour with whom you have worked closely over the years: Lisa Batiashvili, with whom you'll be doing Bartók's Second Violin Concerto as well as the Sibelius Concerto, and Thomas Hampson, who will be performing Mahler's Kindertotenlieder.

AG: Lisa Batiashvili is one of my favorite collaborators. We have worked together frequently and I just saw her a few weeks ago in Europe with a different orchestra. She did the Sibelius Concerto with the New York Philharmonic last season to great acclaim, and the Bartók is a piece that I know she plays inimitably. I can't wait. As for Tom Hampson, he is one of the world's foremost exponents of Mahler's songs. I remember hearing his early recordings with Leonard Bernstein that, in a sense, introduced me to those pieces when I was a high school student just getting to know the music.

Q: You'll be performing Mahler's music around the time of the centenary of the composer's death [Mahler died on May 18, 1911]. How does it feel to be performing his music in cities that were so important to the composer's development and career?

AG: Mahler is obviously a crucially important composer globally, and particularly for the New York Philharmonic, which has such a distinguished tradition and was fortunate enough to have had Mahler as Music Director. It's kind of remarkable and magical that we are collaborating together at this time – Tom, the New York Philharmonic, Mahler – and it's a privilege to play the composer's music on tour in cities that have such a wonderful history and tradition of recognizing and championing this important music.

Q: When you get back from Europe you'll be playing some interesting programs here in New York. The first features Bruckner's Second Symphony. The composer's Fourth, Seventh and Eighth Symphonies are probably the best known and are frequently described as his masterpieces, but you've chosen to do the Second. Do you consider it one of the composer's unjustly neglected works?

AG: I think the Second Symphony of Bruckner is an incredibly powerful work. One of the things that I admire about Bruckner is the consistency of his output. Even the symphonies that are less often played – like the First, or the Second – are, I think, of equal value to the well-known ones, and they show an important side to his personality and character and development. I've

long loved the Second Symphony. It's been fun to hear the New York Philharmonic musicians who are preparing already for next month's performances, say, "We've never played this piece and it's unusual for such a wonderful masterpiece to have slipped through the cracks."

Q: *The final performances by the Philharmonic this season will feature a reunion with designer-director Doug Fitch, with whom you did your acclaimed performances of Ligeti's Le Grand Macabre last season. This time you'll be doing Janáček's The Cunning Little Vixen.*

AG: Rehearsals haven't started yet, but Doug and his team already have been working long and hard on making costumes and designing the show. I was recently down at his studio in Brooklyn, and frankly I was stunned by the genius that is at work there. It's really gorgeous, and I think perfectly conceived. It's actually a very complicated opera to produce. It tells a very human story, but the characters are both human and animal. There's so much fantasy in the piece, but it has to feel real: it can't feel like a trite, silly children's story. It has to be really meaningful, and the characters have to interact in meaningful ways. The concept that Doug has come up with, and the images that he has come up with, are so powerful and so true to the spirit of the piece that I think this will be an important production of this landmark opera.

Q: *Besides the Sinfonietta and a few other works, Janáček didn't write much orchestral music. That's unfortunate, don't you think?*

AG: The Philharmonic certainly hasn't played much of his music, but that's an important reason for an orchestra like the New York Philharmonic to do a piece like this. First of all, to work in the dramatic world and in the vocal world is incredibly important for orchestras, and it incidentally affords the opportunity for discovering new masterpieces. There tend not to be many orchestral works that are true masterpieces that an orchestra hasn't played. But there are definitely operatic works the orchestra hasn't played that absolutely qualify as true masterworks. Janáček's *The Cunning Little Vixen* is certainly one of those.

Alan Gilbert: upcoming engagements

May 12-24

EUROPE / SPRING 2011 with the New York Philharmonic

Basel, Switzerland (May 12)
Baden-Baden, Germany (May 13)
Munich, Germany (May 14)
Vienna, Austria (May 15 & 17)
Budapest, Hungary (May 18)
Berlin, Germany (May 19)
Dresden, Germany (May 21 & 22)
Leipzig, Germany (May 23)
Prague, Czech Republic (May 24)

May 30

New York, NY
Cathedral Church of Saint John the Divine
New York Philharmonic
Free Annual Memorial Day Concert

Barber: Adagio for Strings
Beethoven: Symphony No. 3, "Eroica"

June 2-4

New York, NY
Avery Fisher Hall
New York Philharmonic
Beethoven: Romance for Violin and Orchestra No. 2 in F major
Sebastian Currier: *Time Machines* (world premiere, with violinist Anne-Sophie Mutter, the Philharmonic's Mary and James G. Wallach Artist-in-Residence)
Bruckner: Symphony No. 2

June 22-25

New York, NY
Avery Fisher Hall
New York Philharmonic
Janáček: *The Cunning Little Vixen*
Fully-staged production directed and designed by Doug Fitch

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