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For immediate release  
**Conversation with Alan Gilbert, October 2009**

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## **Alan Gilbert Discusses His First Three Weeks as Music Director of the New York Philharmonic and His First Tour With the Orchestra**

After conducting the opening night gala concert of the New York Philharmonic, and its first three weeks of subscription concerts, the orchestra's new Music Director, Alan Gilbert, took a few moments to reflect on a remarkably busy couple of weeks as he and the orchestra prepared for their Asia Horizons tour.

***Q: Judging from the standing ovations that followed your first performances with the New York Philharmonic as its Music Director, you must feel that your first three weeks on the job have been a great success.***

**AG:** I'm enormously happy and proud of the way things have gone. Perhaps the thing that I'm most happy about now that I've completed these first couple of weeks is that I was genuinely able to enjoy it. Playing this huge range of music with this amazing orchestra felt natural – a very rich experience – and it felt great to be able to get beyond the scrutiny and the stress.

***Q: The audience seemed surprised and then delighted that you spoke from the podium about a few of the works. A New York Times critic noted it in a review and pointed out that you were particularly good at it. How far in advance did you plan to have these chats with the audience?***

**AG:** I knew for a while that I'd be speaking to the audience. Over the last two and a half years, I've gotten many random comments, suggestions, and thoughts from audience members and board members and music lovers and people I meet on the street. If I had categorized these comments and suggestions, by far the number one comment and request was, "Please speak to the audience." This suggestion was the most popular one by a very large majority, more than "Please do contemporary music," or "Please do a lot of Beethoven." "Please speak to the audience" was by a landslide the number one comment that was expressed to me. That gave me confidence. As I was studying the score to Schönberg's *Pelleas und Melisande* – a truly amazing work – I felt strongly that it would benefit from a direct introduction and some hopefully illuminating background.

***Q: Aside from performances in Colorado and Caramoor, you've never conducted the orchestra on tour. What are you feeling as you prepare to take them to Asia for your first tour?***

**AG:** To be honest, touring is challenging and taxing and demanding, but I'm actually looking forward to the relief that being on the road will provide!

***Q: You have many connections in Tokyo, so you must be excited about performing in Japan. You have family there and you've performed there many times.***

**AG:** I love the audience in Tokyo. Many people say when they first play there that the audience is inscrutable, but from many years of experience I know that they are passionate and knowledgeable and totally engaged. And there is such amazing food to be enjoyed in that city.

**Q: How would you quickly sum up the appeal of this city to someone who has never been there?**

**AG:** Tokyo is a juxtaposition of the old and new, the traditional and the ultra modern – it's a paradox, but it all works itself out in a unique way – like all great cities.

**Q: And the Philharmonic's debut in Vietnam must be something you're particularly excited about.**

**AG:** Yes, I'm thrilled that we'll be playing in Hanoi. I spent some very memorable days there a few months ago as we were finalizing our tour planning, and the people were very open and kind. It is going to be a powerful experience. It's also going to be fun. While we're in Hanoi I'll be prowling around the city with Mimi Sheraton, the former *New York Times* food writer and author. We'll be searching for the "Real Pho."

**Q: The program you'll be doing later this month, when you're back in New York, will include your first chamber concert of the season.**

**AG:** Emanuel Ax will be playing Beethoven's Piano Concerto, and the orchestra will also be playing Manuel de Falla's *Three-Cornered Hat* and Bernstein's *West Side Story* Dances. I'll also be playing some chamber music on a matinee concert – second violin in Schumann's Piano Quintet. I'm really looking forward to it – playing chamber music with such fabulous musicians is always a thrill.

### **Alan Gilbert and the New York Philharmonic – upcoming performances**

#### **Asia Horizons Tour (October 8-24)**

Tokyo, Japan (October 8, 9, 10); Seoul, Korea (October 12, 13); Hanoi (Vietnam debut, October 16, 17); Singapore (October 19, 20); Abu Dhabi, U.A.E. (debut, October 23); and Al Ain, U.A.E. (October 24)

#### **Avery Fisher Hall, New York City**

Friday, October 30 and Saturday, October 31 at 8pm

Beethoven: *Egmont Overture*; Piano Concerto No. 3 (Emanuel Ax, piano)

Bernstein: Symphonic Dances from *West Side Story*

de Falla: Suite No. 2 from *The Three-Cornered Hat*

#### **Avery Fisher Hall, New York City**

Saturday, October 31 at 2pm

Schumann: Piano Quintet in E-flat major (Emanuel Ax, piano; Glenn Dicterow and Alan Gilbert, violin; Cynthia Phelps, viola; Carter Brey, cello)

Beethoven: *Egmont Overture*; Piano Concerto No. 3 (Emanuel Ax, piano)

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