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Alan Gilbert discusses his fall 2012 highlights

Contact Glenn Petry (212) 625-2038

gpetry@21cmediagroup.com

This Fall, Alan Gilbert Launches Fourth Season as Music Director of NY Philharmonic, Makes Berlin Staatskapelle Debut, and Leads Juilliard *Così*

Alan Gilbert launches his fourth season as Music Director of the **New York Philharmonic** on September 19, when he leads the first of four “imaginatively conceived” (*New York Times*) subscription concerts presenting Norwegian pianist **Leif Ove Andsnes** as soloist in Beethoven’s Third Piano Concerto and Kurtág’s *...quasi una fantasia...*, on a program that concludes with Stravinsky’s *Rite of Spring*. On September 27, Gilbert leads the orchestra in the Philharmonic’s Opening Gala concert with performances by legendary violinist **Itzhak Perlman**, bookended by orchestral showpieces from Respighi. Other highlights of Gilbert’s fall season with the New York Philharmonic include **concerto collaborations** with a number of esteemed soloists, a continuation of “**The Nielsen Project**” featuring both performances and recordings, and the **New York premiere** of **Steven Stucky’s Symphony**, a Philharmonic co-commission (Nov 29 – Dec 1). Away from his home orchestra, Gilbert will be busy as a guest conductor, returning to the podiums of Amsterdam’s **Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra** (Oct 17–19) and Hamburg’s **NDR Symphony Orchestra** (Dec 6, 7 & 9), where he serves as Principal Guest Conductor, and making his debut with the **Berlin Staatskapelle** (Nov 5 & 6). Closer to home, Gilbert will team up with acclaimed director **Stephen Wadsworth** for a fully-staged production of Mozart’s ***Così fan tutte***, co-presented by the Juilliard School and the Metropolitan Opera (Nov 14, 17 & 19).

Following the season-opening appearances by Andsnes and Perlman, a succession of top soloists and exciting up-and-comers will join Gilbert and the orchestra in performances of a wide range of repertoire. The charismatic young Russian pianist **Daniil Trifonov** makes his Philharmonic debut with Prokofiev’s Third Piano Concerto (Sep 28, 29 & Oct 2). Soon after, this season’s artist-in-residence, **Emanuel Ax**, performs concertos by Bach and Schoenberg, following preconcert talks in which the pianist and conductor discuss the Schoenberg (Oct 4–6). “The Nielsen Project” returns to Avery Fisher Hall with performances of the Danish composer’s Flute and Violin Concertos by **Robert Langevin** and **Nikolaj Znaider** respectively (Oct 10–13). **Gil Shaham**’s performance of Samuel Barber’s Violin Concerto anchors a colorful program that also includes Steven Stucky’s Symphony and Rachmaninoff’s *Symphonic Dances* (Nov 29 & 30; Dec 1).

As the cornerstone of “**The Nielsen Project**,” Gilbert and the orchestra plan to perform and record all of the symphonies and concertos of Carl Nielsen. October’s performances of the Flute and Violin Concertos will be recorded for future release on Denmark’s **Dacapo** label. Meanwhile, on September 25, Dacapo will issue the first recording in the series, a pairing of Nielsen’s Second (“The Four Temperaments”) and Third (“Sinfonia espansiva”) Symphonies; the new recording may be pre-ordered on CD [here](#), and is already available as a “Mastered for

iTunes” title. The *New York Times* was enthusiastic about the live performances on which this debut release was based, writing:

“Bringing renewed attention to Nielsen may seem a surprising priority for a New York-born conductor. But music directors should have personal passions, and it is heartening to see Mr. Gilbert turning one of his into a major statement. ... Mr. Gilbert drew colorful, glittering, and full-bodied playing from the musicians.”

Marking the New York Philharmonic’s first recording of the composer’s complete symphonic cycle, Nielsen’s six symphonies and three concertos will initially be released over four single CDs, and then, in 2015, as a boxed set commemorating the 150th anniversary of his birth.

Gilbert, who is also Director of Conducting and Orchestral Studies at the Juilliard School, has already led his alma mater’s orchestra in warmly received orchestral concerts, but this is the first time he will have turned the young musicians’ attention to an opera. His three performances of **Mozart’s *Così fan tutte*** (Nov 14, 17 & 19) feature the Juilliard Orchestra with a cast drawn from the Met’s Lindemann Young Artist Development Program and Juilliard’s own Ellen and James S. Marcus Institute for Vocal Arts. Gilbert notes:

“I have found working with the incredibly dedicated instrumental students at Juilliard to be enormously inspiring, and I am very gratified now to be sharing my passion for opera not only with them but also with Juilliard vocal students and Lindemann Young Artists.”

The conductor made his Metropolitan Opera debut in November 2008, leading John Adams’s *Doctor Atomic* in what was both the first New York staging of the opera and the company’s first Adams production; a recording of Gilbert’s performance won the 2012 Grammy Award for Best Opera Recording. In recent seasons, the conductor has led a wide range of operatic repertoire in America and Europe, including Wagner’s *Lohengrin* for his debut last season with the Royal Swedish Opera and his justly celebrated New York Philharmonic productions of Ligeti’s *Le grand macabre* and Janáček’s *Cunning Little Vixen*.

In the conversation below, Alan Gilbert discusses some of his fall engagements. Additional information may be found at his website: www.alangilbert.com.

Alan Gilbert looks ahead to a busy fall season

Q: *Time sure does fly! Can you believe the 2012-13 season is already your fourth as Music Director of the New York Philharmonic?*

AG: I like to build programs organically, and little segments of seasons organically, and entire seasons with some sort of line or logic. But now, the interesting thing about my relationship with the New York Philharmonic is that it’s possible to start thinking about an arc over multiple seasons. It’s hardly possible to believe that we’re in my fourth season now, and that we can look back and see not only isolated events, but a kind of sweep – a larger line. I think that the new season fits in really well: some things are continuations of what we’ve done, but there are also departures. We’ve tried to be really consequent and organic in the way we’ve applied our broader strokes and addressed the bigger questions regarding our goals with programming. On top of all this, I’m just thrilled with and very proud of the extraordinarily high level of music-making that this orchestra gives on a regular basis.

Q: In addition to Beethoven's Third Piano Concerto and music by Kurtág with Leif Ove Andsnes, your first program with the Philharmonic this season features Stravinsky's Rite of Spring, which you performed last season with the Juilliard Orchestra and which premiered in Paris almost a century ago.

AG: *The Rite of Spring* is such an iconic work and I can hardly wait to do it for the first time with the New York Philharmonic. I've heard the orchestra play it many times, and I've done it many times myself, but actually to get to experience what the Philharmonic will be able to do with this work is especially exciting. Leif Ove has recently made a beautiful Beethoven recording where he is conducting the Mahler Chamber Orchestra from the keyboard. He's such a serious, spontaneous musician, who is always challenging to work with, but also always receptive and collaborative in the best possible way. I really enjoy working with him. Combining the Beethoven Piano Concerto with Kurtág's ...*quasi una fantasia*... in the first half is right up my alley – it's a very exciting idea.

Q: Tell us a bit about the next installments in "The Nielsen Project."

AG: I listened to the final cut of our recording of the Second and Third Symphonies, which is coming out this month, and I was, frankly, blown away. I remembered what it felt like to be in the middle of the performances, but when I hear what Dacapo's recording engineers have come up with, in terms of the faithful reproduction of the sonic beauty and power that the New York Philharmonic brought to these pieces, I was really pleased. I hope that everyone will thoroughly enjoy this recording. Nielsen was such a human composer. His personality was quirky and offbeat, and this really comes out in the concertos we will be performing in October. But he was always true to life in everything he wrote, and I love these two concertos.

Q: Despite a busy schedule in New York this fall, you'll be heading back to Europe for return guest conducting engagements as well as a debut.

AG: The Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra is obviously one of the world's greatest orchestras, and I've had a great relationship with them over the years. It's always a pleasure to go back there. I love the city, and I particularly love the hall: the Concertgebouw is just one of the great places in the world to play music. I'm also thrilled to be heading back to Berlin, but this time to a new orchestra: the Staatskapelle. Daniel Barenboim has been asking me to come work at the opera for a long time, and we finally came up with these dates with the orchestra. In something of a compromise – or at least a nod – to the opera dimension, I'm doing concert performances of Bartók's *Bluebeard's Castle*. I've loved hearing this orchestra play and I'm looking forward to beginning what I hope will be a mutually rewarding relationship.

Q: You've led exciting orchestral programs with the Juilliard musicians over the past couple of seasons, but this fall you're heading in the direction of opera. Is it daunting to think about doing such an iconic work as Mozart's *Così fan tutte* with so many young musicians and singers?

AG: We've put together an amazing cast and I've conducted Mozart with success in the past, so I'm more excited than anything else. Making music with the Juilliard students has been a source of great pleasure for me and this is going to be a wonderful project for all involved. Stephen Wadsworth brings an absolutely probing approach to everything he directs, and his insights into life and human relationships will no doubt provide a great deal of illumination.

Alan Gilbert: fall 2012 engagements

Sept 19, 20, 21 & 22; New York, NY

New York Philharmonic

Kurtág: ...*quasi una fantasia*... (with Leif Ove Andsnes)
Beethoven: Piano Concerto No. 3 (with Leif Ove Andsnes)
Stravinsky: *The Rite of Spring*

Sept 27; New York, NY

New York Philharmonic

Respighi: *The Fountains of Rome*
Selections for violin and orchestra (with Itzhak Perlman):
Rimsky-Korsakov: Fantasy on Russian Themes
Massenet: "Méditation" from *Thaïs*
Tchaikovsky/arr. Glazunov: Scherzo from *Souvenir d'un lieu cher*
John Williams: Theme from *Schindler's List*
Sarasate: Introduction and Tarantella
Respighi: *The Pines of Rome*

Sept 28, 29 & Oct 2; New York, NY

New York Philharmonic

Mussorgsky: *Night on Bald Mountain*
Prokofiev: Piano Concerto No. 3 (with Daniil Trifonov)
Rimsky-Korsakov: *Scheherazade*

Sept 29; New York, NY

New York Philharmonic

Saturday Matinee Concert

Brahms: Clarinet Quintet
Rimsky-Korsakov: *Scheherazade*

Oct 4, 5 & 6; New York, NY

New York Philharmonic

J.S. Bach: Keyboard Concerto in D minor (with Emanuel Ax)
Schoenberg: Piano Concerto (with Emanuel Ax)
Mozart: Symphony No. 36

Oct 10, 11, 12 & 13; New York, NY

New York Philharmonic

Nielsen: Flute Concerto (with Robert Langevin)
Nielsen: Violin Concerto (with Nikolaj Znaider)
Tchaikovsky: Symphony No. 2

Oct 17, 18 & 19; Amsterdam, Netherlands (Concertgebouw)

Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra

Wassenaer: Concerto armonico No. 2 in B-flat
Stravinsky: *Pulcinella* Suite
R. Strauss: Oboe Concerto (with Lucas Macías Navarro)
Hindemith: *Symphonic Metamorphoses*

Nov 5; Berlin, Germany (Philharmonie)

Berlin Staatskapelle (debut)

Beethoven: Symphony No. 5
Bartók: *Duke Bluebeard's Castle*

**Nov 6; Berlin, Germany (Konzerthaus)
Berlin Staatskapelle**

Beethoven: Symphony No. 5
Bartók: *Duke Bluebeard's Castle*

**Nov 14, 17 & 19; New York, NY
Juilliard Orchestra**

Mozart: *Così fan tutte*

**Nov 29 & 30; Dec 1; New York, NY
New York Philharmonic**

New York, NY
Stucky: Symphony (New York premiere, Philharmonic co-commission)
Barber: Violin Concerto (with Gil Shaham)
Rachmaninoff: *Symphonic Dances*

**Dec 6 & 9; Hamburg, Germany (Laeiszhalle Musikhalle)
NDR Symphony Orchestra Hamburg**

Shostakovich: Violin Concerto No. 1 (with Frank Peter Zimmermann)
Tchaikovsky: *The Nutcracker*, Act II

**Dec 7; Lübeck, Germany (Musik und Kongresshalle)
NDR Symphony Orchestra Hamburg**

Shostakovich: Violin Concerto No. 1 (with Frank Peter Zimmermann)
Tchaikovsky: *The Nutcracker*, Act II

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