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For immediate release

**Alan Gilbert conducts Ligeti's *Le Grand Macabre***

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## **A Landmark Occasion in Alan Gilbert's First Season as Music Director of New York Philharmonic Is the New York Premiere of György Ligeti's Opera, *Le Grand Macabre* (May 27-29)**

It will be a landmark event when Alan Gilbert, still in his inaugural season as Music Director of the New York Philharmonic, leads the orchestra and a cast of dynamic singers in a staged, multi-media production of ***Le Grand Macabre***, an opera by Hungarian composer **György Ligeti** that received its premiere in 1978 in Stockholm. Though one of the most frequently performed contemporary operas, Ligeti's masterpiece – a darkly comic, surreal, and surprisingly moving work about the apparent end of the world – has, remarkably, never before been performed in its entirety in New York. The staged performances at Avery Fisher Hall (May 27 – 29, 2010, with an open rehearsal on May 26) will feature designs and direction by **Doug Fitch**, a genre-crossing artist who has collaborated with Gilbert on a number of projects including staged operas at Santa Fe Opera and Los Angeles Opera. Gilbert observes, "I think Doug's plans for this opera are perfect for this piece, and this remarkable score will, I'm sure, be given a superb performance by the New York Philharmonic musicians and an extremely talented cast of singers. I think it's going to be an absolutely compelling rendition of this landmark of 20<sup>th</sup>-century opera."

Ligeti's utterly original music has long been attractive to Gilbert, who first came into contact with it as a violinist in the composer's Horn Trio. In March 2007, as a guest conductor of the New York Philharmonic, Gilbert led the orchestra in a performance of Ligeti's Violin Concerto (with soloist Christian Tetzlaff) that the *New York Times* called "a knockout" – and it was later selected by the same critic as one of the best musical events of the year. In an interview published in the May issue of *Opera News*, Gilbert explains to writer William R. Braun the decision to perform this particular opera.

"Since we're an orchestra, it has to be something that is clearly driven by wonderful orchestral textures, and *Le Grand Macabre* has that. It's not as if we're doing bel canto or Puccini. And there's a benefit that comes from an orchestra working with voices — the shaping of the line, the breathing, a slightly different type of music."

The complete interview, which includes a thorough introduction to the work, is available at the *Opera News* web site:

[http://www.operanews.com/Opera\\_News\\_Magazine/2010/5/Features/The\\_Mad\\_Show.html](http://www.operanews.com/Opera_News_Magazine/2010/5/Features/The_Mad_Show.html)

Alan Gilbert is proud that his first season will include the New York premiere of such a seminal work, and he is confident that audiences will respond to it enthusiastically:

“*Le Grand Macabre* is a highlight of the season for me. It’s a fantastic, fantastical contemporary opera. It’s basically about the existential crisis in the modern world; about finding meaning in life, wondering whether — with all the nonsense and craziness that’s going on in the world — it all amounts to a hill of beans. It’s a very strange score in many ways, but it also has amazingly traditional, lush melodies. It’s about trying to find order and meaning, and there are lots of symbolic and grotesque and unusual characters. It’s a real theatrical tour de force and will provide something dramatic as well as musical for everyone to identify with.”

Gilbert speaks about the opera in the June issue of *Vanity Fair*, describing the production as “symbolic, erotic and bizarre.” Gilbert will lead the New York Philharmonic in additional programs later this spring and in the first days of summer, including the free annual Memorial Day Concert at the Cathedral Church of Saint John the Divine (May 31); an appearance as violist in Brahms’s Sextet No. 2 with musicians from the New York Philharmonic (June 12); and season-ending performances of Beethoven’s monumental *Missa Solemnis*, paired with the world premiere of a new work by Magnus Lindberg – the orchestra’s Marie-Josée Kravis Composer-in-Residence – commissioned by the New York Philharmonic (June 23-26).

### **For additional information on *Le Grand Macabre* and related events:**

Visit the New York Philharmonic’s web site ([nyphil.org/macabre](http://nyphil.org/macabre)) where, among other things, you can go behind the scenes at Doug Fitch’s studio in Sunset Park, Brooklyn, for a video preview of the new production of Ligeti’s *Le Grand Macabre*.

Q2, WQXR’s contemporary classical music stream, will air a special series about *Le Grand Macabre* weekdays from Monday, May 17 until Thursday, May 27. Alan Gilbert and Doug Fitch shed light on Ligeti’s only opera, with exclusive insights, comments, and sneak previews of what to expect from the production. Visit [wqxr.org/Q2](http://wqxr.org/Q2).

### **Alan Gilbert – upcoming engagements**

May 27-29, 2010

Ligeti: *Le Grand Macabre*

New York Philharmonic

Avery Fisher Hall (New York, NY)

Doug Fitch, director and designer

Edouard Getaz, producer

Production created by Giants Are Small

Catherine Zuber, costume designer

Clifton Taylor, lighting designer

May 31

New York Philharmonic

The Cathedral Church of Saint John the Divine (New York, NY)

Free annual Memorial Day Concert

Copland: *Fanfare for the Common Man*

Haydn: Symphony No. 49, *La Passione*

Schubert: Symphony in B minor, *Unfinished*

Beethoven: *Egmont* Overture

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*  
HK Gruber: *Aerial* (Håkan Hardenberger, trumpet)  
Mozart: Symphony No. 25  
Wagner: *Tristan und Isolde*: Prelude and *Liebested*

June 23-26  
New York Philharmonic  
Avery Fisher Hall (New York, NY)  
Lindberg: new work (world premiere)  
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)

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