

For immediate release
Alan Gilbert's Winter/Spring 2009

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**Alan Gilbert, Music Director-Designate of New York Philharmonic,
Returns to Podiums of Boston Symphony Orchestra and Berlin
Philharmonic Orchestra in March and April, Before Returning to His
Hometown to Lead NYPO in Two Sets of Spring Concerts**

Alan Gilbert's first season as the new **Music Director** of the **New York Philharmonic** doesn't begin until September 2009, but he'll be back this spring to lead his hometown orchestra in two programs (Apr 30 – May 5 and May 7–9, respectively) that will include his **first performance of a Mahler symphony with the orchestra** as well as the **world premiere of *The World in Flower***, a new work by composer **Peter Lieberson**, commissioned by the New York Philharmonic. Before those concerts, however, Gilbert will return to the podiums of several major orchestras on both sides of the Atlantic, including the **Boston Symphony Orchestra** (Mar 5–10), Hamburg's **NDR Symphony Orchestra** (Mar 27–29), and the **Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra** (Apr 18 and 19). Before returning to New York, he will also make his debut with the **Vienna Symphony Orchestra** (Mar 18–21).

In Boston, Gilbert will conduct **Charles Ives's** haunting (and daunting) **Symphony No. 4**, which he conducted to great acclaim with the New York Philharmonic in June 2004. Alex Ross reported on the occasion for the *New Yorker*:

"After intermission [Gilbert] turned in a stupendous performance of the Ives Fourth. Often, this piece comes off as a kind of spring break for orchestra, oboes gone wild; ... Gilbert made the notorious 'Comedy' movement into an overwhelming force of nature, almost scary in its progress. Then, in the fugal slow movement, he led with a hypnotic slow beat, at once liquid and exact. The strings sang out in endless intertwining lines, and emotion surged through the music. This man can conduct."

Anne Midgette wrote presciently in the *New York Times*: "The Ives concert he led on Saturday night sounded fantastic. He leads with authority, energy, humor. And he seems to be on the way to a big career."

With the Berlin Philharmonic, Gilbert will conduct an all-Czech program featuring **Dvorák's** beloved **Cello Concerto**, with soloist Steven Isserlis, and **Martínu's** deeply expressive **Symphony No. 4**. Gilbert led the Chicago Symphony in the latter work in February 2005, prompting veteran critic John von Rhein to write in the *Chicago Tribune*,

"This meaty neoclassical score abounds in memorable ideas, good-humored energy, and scoring that's remarkably airy despite its size, including an athletic piano part. Gilbert and the orchestra gave back to the audience everything that is affirmative in this masterpiece."

Gilbert first conducted the storied BPO in February 2006, substituting at the last minute for an indisposed Bernard Haitink. Klaus Geitel, the dean of German music critics, was on hand to give this glowing account in the *Berliner Morgenpost*:

“Only a month after his triumphant Berlin debut with the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester in a glorious performance of Mahler’s Sixth Symphony in the Konzerthaus, Alan Gilbert ... was on the podium again, this time in the Philharmonie and in front of the Berlin Philharmonic. ... He is a bundle of energy who fully understands how to coax his orchestra into a real frenzy. The outer movements [of Schumann’s First Symphony] swell in his hands right up to their gigantic releases. But he also proves to be a master of delicate nuances. The *largo* was absolutely poetic – dying away as if breathing its last ... Gilbert is the name of the man on the podium, and we hope he’ll come back to Berlin again soon. He is absolutely aquiver with musicality and a clear view of his goal, but he’s self-contained, not nervous or high-strung, and not flashy. He knows exactly which way he wants to take the music. And that’s the way music works: anyone who doesn’t know what’s at the end can’t find the way there. Gilbert never takes his eye off it, and all his passion never distracts him from that goal. His gestures are extremely clear and his body-language speaks volumes, especially the musical language of the score in front of him. He is the embodiment of a conducting ‘event.’”

In the brief interview below, Alan Gilbert discusses his upcoming engagements. Complete dates and program details also follow. For additional information visit Alan Gilbert’s new web site: www.alan gilbert.com.

A conversation with Alan Gilbert

Last month you were at a press conference on the stage of Avery Fisher Hall announcing the details of your first season as Music Director of the New York Philharmonic. What did that feel like?

It was an incredible relief to talk publicly about ideas that had been swirling around my head for a year and a half. A music director’s first season receives a certain kind of scrutiny that made it feel somewhat pressured, but the fact is that I’m really proud of what we’ve come up with and I think it’s a wonderful season. All of the concerts feature programs that I’d love to hear. It’s my hope that the public in New York will feel the same!

You’ve recently been conducting Mahler’s Third Symphony with both the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic and the NDR Symphony, and it’s one of the first pieces you’ll be doing with the NYPO in your first season. Does this work have a special significance for you and does your approach to it differ with each orchestra?

Any time an element in a performance changes, the result will be different. Two different conductors working with the same orchestra will have a different result working on the same piece, and a conductor working on the same piece with two different orchestras will come up with a different result. It’s the chemistry of the moment that’s important in live performance, which is why it’s fun to do the same piece with different orchestras. Doing Mahler Three over the last couple of weeks gave me a chance to experiment. The magnificent last movement can stand a huge range of interpretative choices, and that was fun to play with.

Your May concerts with the New York Philharmonic feature another Mahler Symphony – the First. Have you done Mahler before with the orchestra, and how does it feel to know that the composer was one of your predecessors on the podium?

The New York Philharmonic has a unique way with Mahler. This will, in fact, be the first symphony of Mahler's that I've done with them. I have, however, done Mahler orchestral songs with them. I've heard them play Mahler my whole life. There are very few places that have such an intrinsic understanding of the world of Mahler and I couldn't be more excited to have the possibility of doing lots by this composer with this great orchestra.

There will also be the world premiere of The World in Flower, a new song cycle by Peter Lieberson, on that program, which features guest soloist mezzo-soprano Joyce DiDonato. Have you conducted Lieberson's music before? And have you worked with Joyce before?

I have never conducted Peter's music, but I know him well and have known him for a long time. He was my composition and theory teacher in Harvard and I've known and loved his music for a long time. Joyce is someone I got to know in Santa Fe when I was conducting the opera there. She's a fantastic artist and is having well-deserved success.

Some critics described your performance of Ives's Fourth Symphony with the New York Philharmonic, a few seasons ago, as a breakthrough. Did it feel that way to you at the time, and what made you program it with the Boston Symphony, where you'll conduct it in early March?

It's an amazing work, and the New York Philharmonic played it brilliantly when we did it during their Ives festival a few seasons ago. One of the reasons for doing it with the BSO was that the orchestra was interested in it. I threw the idea of doing it out there, knowing that few orchestras are willing to take on the enormous logistical challenges the work presents, so I was enormously pleased that they agreed to do it.

Soon after that you make another important return engagement, this time to Berlin to do Martinu's Symphony No. 4 and Dvorák's Cello Concerto with the Berlin Philharmonic.

I can't wait. It will be my second time with an orchestra that I've admired for a long time, so I hope this is the next step in a long relationship.

Alan Gilbert – highlights of upcoming engagements

March 5, 6, 7, and 10 (Boston, MA)

Boston Symphony Orchestra

Sibelius: *Night Ride and Sunrise*; Rachmaninoff: *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini* (with Stephen Hough); Ives: *Symphony No. 4*

March 18, 19, 20, and 21 (Vienna, Austria)

Vienna Symphony Orchestra

Beethoven: "Coriolan" Overture; Shostakovich: *Cello Concerto No. 2* (with Heinrich Schiff); Bartók: *Concerto for Orchestra*

March 27–29 (Hamburg [Mar 27 and 29] and Kiel [Mar 28], Germany)

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NDR Symphony Orchestra, Hamburg

Maurice Ravel: *Daphnis et Chloé*, Suites 1 and 2; Debussy: *Three Nocturnes*

Program includes Messiaen: *Poèmes pour Mi* (Mar 27 and 29) and Haydn: Concerto for Violin and Orchestra in C major (with Roland Greutter – Mar 28)

April 18 and 19 (Berlin, Germany)

Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra

Dvorák: Cello Concerto (with Steven Isserlis); Martinu: Symphony No. 4

April 30, May 1, 2, and 5 (New York, NY)

New York Philharmonic

Dvorák: *The Golden Spinning Wheel*; Saint-Saëns: Violin Concerto No. 3 (with Joshua Bell);

Martinu: Symphony No. 4

May 7–9 (New York, NY)

New York Philharmonic

Mahler: *Blumine*; Lieberson: *The World in Flower* (world premiere and New York Philharmonic commission with Joyce DiDonato, mezzo-soprano; Russell Braun, baritone; and the New York Choral Artists); Mahler: Symphony No. 1

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– February 24, 2009