FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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ALAN GILBERT AND THE NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC

SIBELIUS WORKS FOR 150TH BIRTHDAY:
THE SWAN OF TUONELA, SYMPHONY NO. 4, and FINLANDIA

JOSHUA BELL To Perform MENDELSSOHN’s Violin Concerto

December 29–30, 2015, and January 2, 2016

FREE INSIGHTS AT THE ATRIUM EVENT
“Sibelius in New York: An Archival Exploration”
January 5, 2016

Music Director Alan Gilbert will conduct the New York Philharmonic in Sibelius’s The Swan of Tuonela, Symphony No. 4, and Finlandia, as well as Mendelssohn’s Violin Concerto, with Joshua Bell as soloist. The concerts take place Tuesday, December 29, 2015, at 7:30 p.m.; Wednesday, December 30 at 7:30 p.m.; and Saturday, January 2 at 8:00 p.m.

This program is one of four featuring Alan Gilbert leading works by Sibelius in honor of the 150th anniversary of the composer’s birth on December 8, 1865. He will also conduct Sibelius’s En saga (January 7–9 and 12, 2016); Violin Concerto with Leonidas Kavakos as soloist (March 17–19, 2016); and Symphony No. 7 (April 20–22, 2016). The 2015–16 season will also feature Sibelius’s Symphony No. 2, led by John Storgårds in his Philharmonic debut (May 12–14, 2016).

“Sibelius is one of the great 20th-century symphonists, and the 150th anniversary of his birth is an event to be celebrated by orchestras that have been enriched by his music. His music says something very true about all of humanity,” Alan Gilbert said. “The Fourth Symphony is deeply pessimistic and profoundly tragic, and deciding to perform it is a commitment to a very difficult emotional road, but its evocation of a powerfully visceral, emotional landscape is what makes it so astonishing.”

The New York Philharmonic’s free Insights at the Atrium series will present “Sibelius in New York: An Archival Exploration,” Tuesday, January 5, 2016, at 7:30 p.m., at which The Leonard Bernstein Scholar-in-Residence Matthew Mugmon will explore Sibelius’s relationship with New York City, with a special focus on materials found in the New York Philharmonic Archives, in

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related to the 150th anniversary of Jean Sibelius’s birth. The event takes place at the David Rubenstein Atrium at Lincoln Center (Columbus Avenue at 62nd Street) and is co-presented with Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts.

**Related Events**

- **Pre-Concert Insights**
  The Leonard Bernstein Scholar-in-Residence Matthew Mugmon will introduce the program. *Pre-Concert Insights* are $7, and discounts are available for three (3) or more talks and for students. They take place one hour before these performances in the Helen Hull Room, unless otherwise noted. Attendance is limited to 90 people. Information: [nyphil.org/preconcert](http://nyphil.org/preconcert) or (212) 875-5656.

- **Insights at the Atrium — “Sibelius in New York: An Archival Exploration”**
  New York Philharmonic Leonard Bernstein Scholar-in-Residence **Matthew Mugmon**, speaker
  **Tuesday, January 5, 2016, 7:30 p.m.**
  David Rubenstein Atrium at Lincoln Center (Columbus Avenue at 62nd Street)
  In recognition of the 150th anniversary of Jean Sibelius’s birth, The Leonard Bernstein Scholar-in-Residence Matthew Mugmon explores the composer’s fascinating relationship with New York City, with a special focus on materials found in the New York Philharmonic Archives. This event takes place in conjunction with several Philharmonic programs in the 2015–16 season honoring the 150th anniversary of Sibelius’s birth through performances of his works. *Insights at the Atrium* events are free and open to the public. Seating is available on a first-come, first-served basis. Subscribers, Friends at the Fellow level and above, and Patrons may secure guaranteed admission by emailing AdultEd@nyphil.org. Space is limited.

**Artists**

Music Director **Alan Gilbert** began his New York Philharmonic tenure in 2009, the first native New Yorker in the post. He and the Philharmonic have introduced the positions of The Marie-Josée Kravis Composer-in-Residence, The Mary and James G. Wallach Artist-in-Residence, and Artist-in-Association; CONTACT!, the new-music series; NY PHIL BIENNIAL, an exploration of today’s music; and New York Philharmonic Global Academy, collaborations with partners worldwide offering training of pre-professional musicians, often alongside performance residencies. As *The New Yorker* wrote, “Gilbert has made an indelible mark on the orchestra’s history and that of the city itself.”

Alan Gilbert’s 2015–16 Philharmonic highlights include R. Strauss’s *Ein Heldenleben* to welcome Concertmaster Frank Huang; Carnegie Hall’s Opening Night Gala; and five World Premieres. He co-curates and conducts in the second NY PHIL BIENNIAL and performs violin in Messiaen’s *Quartet for the End of Time*. He leads the Orchestra as part of the Shanghai Orchestra Academy Residency and Partnership and appears at Santa Barbara’s Music Academy of the West. Philharmonic-tenure highlights include acclaimed stagings of Ligeti’s *Le Grand Macabre*, Janáček’s *The Cunning Little Vixen*, Stephen Sondheim’s *Sweeney Todd* starring Bryn Terfel and Emma Thompson (for which Mr. Gilbert was nominated for a 2015 Emmy Award for (more)
Outstanding Music Direction), and Honegger’s *Joan of Arc at the Stake* starring Marion Cotillard; 24 World Premieres; The Nielsen Project, a performance and recording cycle; Verdi Requiem and Bach’s B-minor Mass; the score from *2001: A Space Odyssey* alongside the film; Mahler’s *Resurrection* Symphony on the tenth anniversary of 9/11; and nine tours around the world. In August 2015 he led the Mahler Chamber Orchestra in the U.S. Stage Premiere of George Benjamin’s *Written on Skin*, co-presented as part of the Lincoln Center–New York Philharmonic Opera Initiative.

Conductor laureate of the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra and principal guest conductor of Hamburg’s NDR Symphony Orchestra, Alan Gilbert regularly conducts leading orchestras around the world. This season Mr. Gilbert makes debuts with four great European orchestras — Filarmonica della Scala, Dresden Staatskapelle, London Symphony, and Academy of St Martin in the Fields — and returns to The Cleveland Orchestra and Tokyo Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra. He made his acclaimed Metropolitan Opera debut conducting John Adams’s *Doctor Atomic* in 2008, the DVD of which received a Grammy Award. Renée Fleming’s recent Decca recording *Poèmes*, on which he conducted, received a 2013 Grammy Award. His recordings have received top honors from the *Chicago Tribune* and *Gramophone* magazine. Mr. Gilbert is Director of Conducting and Orchestral Studies at The Juilliard School, where he holds the William Schuman Chair in Musical Studies. His honors include an Honorary Doctor of Music degree from The Curtis Institute of Music (2010), Columbia University’s Ditson Conductor’s Award for his “exceptional commitment to the performance of works by American composers and to contemporary music” (2011), election to The American Academy of Arts & Sciences (2014), and a Foreign Policy Association Medal for his commitment to cultural diplomacy (2015).

One of the most celebrated violinists of his era, Joshua Bell’s restless curiosity, passion, and multifaceted musical interests are almost unparalleled in the classical music world. Recently named music director of the Academy of St Martin in the Fields, he is the first person to hold this post since Neville Marriner formed the orchestra in 1958. An exclusive Sony Classical artist, Mr. Bell has recorded more than 40 CDs garnering Grammy, Mercury, Gramophone, and Echo Klassik awards since his first at age 18, on Decca. He began the fall season performing with the Houston, St. Louis, and Indianapolis symphony orchestras. He continues with a U.S. recital tour with pianist Sam Haywood; a European tour with the Academy of St Martin in the Fields; appearances with the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra celebrating its centennial season conducted by Marin Alsop, Orchestre de Paris conducted by Paavo Jarvi, London Symphony Orchestra, and Detroit Symphony, in addition to these concerts with the New York Philharmonic led by Alan Gilbert; and recital tours in Asia with Alessio Bax and in Europe with Sam Haywood. A Middle East performance with the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra, led by Michael Stern, will conclude the year. Born in Bloomington, Indiana, Joshua Bell received his first violin at age four and at twelve began studying with Josef Gingold at Indiana University. At 14 he began his rise to stardom, performing with Riccardo Muti and The Philadelphia Orchestra, and making his Carnegie Hall debut at 17. He became a household name in 2007 after his incognito performance in a Washington, D.C., subway station; he had agreed to participate in the *Washington Post* story about art and context by Gene Weingarten, a story that earned Weingarten a Pulitzer Prize and sparked an international firestorm of discussion. Joshua Bell performs on the 1713 Huberman (more)
Stradivarius violin and uses a late 18th-century French bow by François Tourte. He made his Philharmonic debut in 1990 performing Prokofiev’s Violin Concerto No. 1 conducted by Charles Dutoit; he most recently appeared with Alan Gilbert and the Orchestra in the summer of 2015 performing Bernstein’s *West Side Story* Suite for Violin and Orchestra at the Concerts in the Parks and in Shanghai, China, as part of the Shanghai Orchestra Academy and Residency Partnership.

**Repertoire**

Jean Sibelius (1865–1957) began work on *The Swan of Tuonela* as part of an 1893 opera project based on the Finnish national epic *Kalevala*. After abandoning that idea, he refashioned much of the work he had done for the opera, including its prelude, which ultimately became the tone poem *The Swan of Tuonela*. The work was premiered by the Helsinki Philharmonic in 1896 as one of the *Four Legends from the Kalevala*. Also known as the *Lemminkäinen Suite*, this quartet of tone poems follows the Casanova-like adventures of the title character. *The Swan of Tuonela* is the darkly moody second section, during which Lemminkäinen has been tasked with killing a sacred swan from the island of the dead. Along the way he is shot with a poisoned arrow, and dies. (He is resurrected in the next in the series, *Lemminkäinen in Tuonela*.) The New York Symphony (which merged with the Philharmonic in 1928) gave the Orchestra’s first performance of *The Swan of Tuonela* in January 1915, led by Walter Damrosch; the Philharmonic most recently performed the entire suite in March 2007, conducted by Colin Davis.

Sibelius’s Symphony No. 4 (1909–11) is acclaimed for being exquisitely dense and compact, and musicologists frequently discuss the “diabolus in musica” (three adjacent whole tones) — a mysterious tritone interval straining to be resolved — that starts and pervades the work. That interval is only resolved much later, and then only with a feeling of resignation. Perhaps a subconscious reflection of Sibelius’s state of mind (the threat of recurring throat cancer hung over him), this symphony is serious and austere, a departure from his earlier works in the genre. The composer wrote: “It stands as a protest against present-day music. It has absolutely nothing of the circus about it,” and asked that it be played “as harsh as fate with all sentimentality excluded.” The New York Symphony (one of the New York Philharmonic’s forebears) presented the U.S. Premiere of the Fourth Symphony in March 1913, conducted by Walter Damrosch; the Philharmonic’s most recent performance of the work was in October 1987, led by Erich Leinsdorf.

In 1835, when Felix Mendelssohn was only 27 years old, he was appointed conductor of the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra and hired longtime friend Ferdinand David as concertmaster. In 1838 Mendelssohn told David, “I want to write a violin concerto next winter. One in E minor is running through my head, and the beginning of it gives me no peace.” It took him six years to complete the *Violin Concerto* (1844), dedicated to the encouragement of David, who was the soloist at the premiere, which was a success. Other performances soon followed, including one in Dresden that launched the career of the 14-year-old prodigy Joseph Joachim, a last-minute substitution in a concert to have featured Clara Schumann. The concerto has been praised for its tight construction (such as the violin’s immediate entrance), linking of phrases between movements, and unusual placement of the first cadenza (in the middle of the first movement). Joachim summed up the beauty and importance of the concerto years later: “The Germans have (more)
four violin concertos. The greatest, the one that makes fewest concessions, is Beethoven’s. The one by Brahms comes close to Beethoven’s in its seriousness. Max Bruch wrote the richest and most seductive of the four. But the dearest of them all, the heart’s jewel, is Mendelssohn’s.” Theodore Elsfeld conducted violinist Joseph Burke in the Philharmonic’s first performance of the concerto, in 1849; Alan Gilbert led its most recent performance during the July 2015 Bravo! Vail residency, featuring Midori.

Sibelius wrote his symphonic poem *Finlandia* (1899, rev. 1900) during the Tsarist rule of Finland for an event protesting the Russian Empire’s increasing censorship of the press. Originally titled *Finland Awakes*, the work illustrated the Finnish people’s spirit, resistance, and faith that they would eventually be a democratic nation once again. It roused anti-Russian sentiment, and future performances were forbidden in order to prevent further unrest. Later, Sibelius revised *Finland Awakes* into a separate tone poem, retitling it *Finlandia*. A majestic opening in the low brass and thundering timpani symbolizes the oppression suffered by the Finnish people under the rule of the Tsar. The central portion is a moving, hymn-like cry for freedom scored for strings and winds, sometimes called the Finlandia Hymn (with lyrics added later, reluctantly, and sung by a chorus in some performances). *Finlandia* has remained popular, becoming Finland’s unofficial national anthem. Josef Stransky conducted the Philharmonic’s first performances of the work in January 1920; the most recent Philharmonic presentations of the complete work were in July 2008 as part of the Concerts in the Parks and during the Orchestra’s Bravo! Vail residency.

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*Insights at the Atrium* is presented in partnership with Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, Inc.

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**Tickets**

Single tickets for this performance start at $33. Pre-Concert Insights are $7 (visit [nyphil.org/preconcert](http://nyphil.org/preconcert) for more information). Tickets may be purchased online at [nyphil.org](http://nyphil.org) or by calling (212) 875-5656, 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Monday through Friday; 1:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. Saturday; and noon to 5:00 p.m. Sunday. Tickets may also be purchased at the David Geffen Hall Box Office. The Box Office opens at 10:00 a.m. Monday through Saturday, and at noon on Sunday. On performance evenings, the Box Office closes one-half hour after performance time; other evenings it closes at 6:00 p.m. A limited number of $16 tickets for select concerts may be available through the Internet for students within 10 days of the performance, or in person the day of. Valid identification is required. To determine ticket availability, call the Philharmonic’s Customer Relations Department at (212) 875-5656. (Ticket prices subject to change.)

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For press tickets, call Lanore Carr at the New York Philharmonic at (212) 875-5714, or email her at carrl@nyphil.org.
New York Philharmonic

David Geffen Hall at Lincoln Center

Tuesday, December 29, 2015, 7:30 p.m.
Open Rehearsal — 9:45 a.m.
Wednesday, December 30, 2015, 7:30 p.m.
Saturday, January 2, 2016, 8:00 p.m.

Pre-Concert Insights (one hour before each concert) with The Leonard Bernstein Scholar-in-Residence Matthew Mugmon

Alan Gilbert, conductor
Joshua Bell, violin

SIBELIUS The Swan of Tuonela
SIBELIUS Symphony No. 4
MENDELSSOHN Violin Concerto
SIBELIUS Finlandia

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