

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ALAN GILBERT AND THE NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC

JOHN ADAMS'S 70th BIRTHDAY YEAR

HARMONIELEHRE

ABSOLUTE JEST with

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC STRING QUARTET IN DEBUT

March 9–11, 2017

Celebrations To Continue on YOUNG PEOPLE'S CONCERT and EUROPE / SPRING 2017 Tour

Music Director Alan Gilbert will conduct the New York Philharmonic in a program celebrating John Adams's 70th birthday year, featuring John Adams's *Harmonielehre* and *Absolute Jest* — with the New York Philharmonic String Quartet as solo ensemble in its debut — on Thursday, March 9, 2017, at 7:30 p.m.; Friday, March 10 at 2:00 p.m.; and Saturday, March 11 at 8:00 p.m.

Alan Gilbert and the Philharmonic's celebrations of the Pulitzer Prize-winning composer's 70th birthday year will continue with performances of John Adams's *The Chairman Dances: Foxtrot for Orchestra* on March 15–18, 2017. They will reprise all three works on the Young People's Concert on March 11, 2017, and on the EUROPE / SPRING 2017 tour, March 23–April 7, 2017.

Established in the 2016–17 season, the New York Philharmonic String Quartet comprises Concertmaster Frank Huang, Principal Associate Concertmaster Sheryl Staples, Principal Viola Cynthia Phelps, and Principal Cello Carter Brey.

“John Adams is the dean of American composers,” said Alan Gilbert. “The kind of personal voice that he has found, which came into its own in *Harmonielehre*, is absolutely vivid and unmistakable. I particularly like that he takes a modern, American sense of expression and uses it to build on the symphonic tradition that goes back to Bruckner in a completely organic way.”

The Philharmonic has enjoyed an ongoing relationship with John Adams since 1983, when it performed the New York Premiere of his *Grand Pianola Music*. The Orchestra has since given the World Premieres of *Scheherazade.2* — Dramatic symphony for violin and orchestra (2015, led by Alan Gilbert with Leila Josefowicz as soloist), co-commissioned by the Philharmonic;

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Easter Eve 1945 (2004, led by Mr. Adams); and the Pulitzer Prize–winning *On the Transmigration of Souls* (2002, led by Lorin Maazel), co-commissioned by the Philharmonic and Lincoln Center’s *Great Performers* in memory of the victims of 9/11. The Philharmonic’s recording of the work on Nonesuch received the 2005 Grammy Awards for Best Classical Album, Best Orchestral Performance, and Best Classical Contemporary Composition. Alan Gilbert made his acclaimed Metropolitan Opera debut in 2008 leading John Adams’s *Doctor Atomic*; the DVD and Blu-ray of this production received the 2012 Grammy Award for Best Opera Recording.

Artists

As Music Director of the New York Philharmonic since 2009, **Alan Gilbert** has 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; the NY PHIL BIENNIAL, an exploration of today’s music; and the New York Philharmonic Global Academy, partnerships with cultural institutions to offer training of pre-professional musicians, often alongside performance residencies. *The Financial Times* called him “the imaginative maestro-impresario in residence.”

Alan Gilbert concludes his final season as Music Director with four programs that reflect themes, works, and musicians that hold particular meaning for him, including Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony alongside Schoenberg’s *A Survivor from Warsaw*, Wagner’s complete *Das Rheingold* in concert, and an exploration of how music can effect positive change in the world. Other highlights include three World Premieres, Mahler’s Fourth Symphony, Ligeti’s *Mysteries of the Macabre*, and *Manhattan*, performed live to film. He also leads the Orchestra on the EUROPE / SPRING 2017 tour and in performance residencies in Shanghai and Santa Barbara. Past 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 (2015 Emmy nomination), and Honegger’s *Joan of Arc at the Stake* starring Marion Cotillard; 28 World Premieres; a tribute to Boulez and Stucky during the 2016 NY PHIL BIENNIAL; The Nielsen Project; the Verdi Requiem and Bach’s B-minor Mass; the score from *2001: A Space Odyssey*, performed live to film; Mahler’s *Resurrection* Symphony on the tenth anniversary of 9/11; performing violin in Messiaen’s *Quartet for the End of Time*; and ten tours around the world.

Conductor laureate of the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra and former principal guest conductor of Hamburg’s NDR Symphony Orchestra, Alan Gilbert regularly conducts leading orchestras around the world. This season he returns to the foremost European orchestras, including the Leipzig Gewandhaus, Munich Philharmonic, Amsterdam’s Royal Concertgebouw, and Orchestra dell’Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia. He will record Beethoven’s complete piano concertos with the Academy of St Martin in the Fields and Inon Barnatan, and conduct Gershwin’s *Porgy and Bess* at Milan’s Teatro alla Scala, his first time leading a staged opera there. He made his acclaimed Metropolitan Opera debut conducting John Adams’s *Doctor Atomic* in 2008, the DVD of which received a Grammy Award, and he conducted Messiaen’s *Des Canyons aux étoiles* on a recent album recorded live at the Santa Fe Chamber Music

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Festival. 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 Honorary Doctor of Music degrees from The Curtis Institute of Music (2010) and Westminster Choir College (2016), Columbia University's Ditson Conductor's Award (2011), election to The American Academy of Arts & Sciences (2014), a Foreign Policy Association Medal for his commitment to cultural diplomacy (2015), Officier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres (2015), and New York University's Lewis Rudin Award for Exemplary Service to New York City (2016).

The **New York Philharmonic String Quartet** comprises four Principal musicians from the Orchestra: Concertmaster Frank Huang (The Charles E. Culpeper Chair); Principal Associate Concertmaster Sheryl Staples (The Elizabeth G. Beinecke Chair); Principal Viola Cynthia Phelps (The Mr. and Mrs. Frederick P. Rose Chair); and Carter Brey (The Fan Fox and Leslie R. Samuels Chair). The group was formed in January 2017, during the Philharmonic's 175th anniversary season; the New York Philharmonic String Quartet will make its debut as the solo ensemble in John Adams's *Absolute Jest* in New York in March 2017, and will reprise the work on the Orchestra's EUROPE / SPRING 2017 tour. All four members are multiple prize winners, have appeared as concerto soloists with the Philharmonic and orchestras around the world, and have appeared frequently in the Philharmonic's chamber music series at David Geffen Hall and Merkin Concert Hall. Frank Huang has performed at the Marlboro Music Festival, Ravinia's Steans Institute, Seattle Chamber Music Festival, and Caramoor. He frequently participates in Musicians from Marlboro's tours, and was selected by The Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center to be a member of the prestigious CMS Two program. Before joining the Houston Symphony as concertmaster in 2010, Frank Huang held the position of first violinist of the Grammy Award-winning Ying Quartet. Sheryl Staples has performed chamber music for U.S. Ambassadors in London, Paris, Berlin, Beijing, and Hong Kong. She toured Mexico, Brazil, and Chile in 2013, and she has appeared at summer festivals including La Jolla Music Society's SummerFest, Boston Chamber Music Society, Salt Bay Chamberfest, and the chamber music festivals of Santa Fe, Mainly Mozart, Seattle, Aspen, Sarasota, Martha's Vineyard, Strings Music Festival, and Brightstar. She appears on three Stereophile CDs with the Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival. Cynthia Phelps performs with The Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, Jupiter Chamber Players, and the Santa Fe, La Jolla, Seattle, Chamber Music Northwest, and Bridgehampton festivals. She has appeared with the Guarneri, Tokyo, Orion, American, Brentano, and Prague Quartets, and the Kalichstein-Laredo-Robinson Trio. She is also a founding member of the chamber group Les Amies, a flute-harp-violin group with Philharmonic Principal Harp Nancy Allen and flutist Carol Wincenc. Carter Brey has made regular appearances with the Tokyo and Emerson string quartets as well as The Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center and at festivals such as Spoleto (both in the United States and Italy), and the Santa Fe and La Jolla Chamber Music festivals. He and pianist Christopher O'Riley recorded *Le Grand Tango: Music of Latin America*, a disc of compositions from South America and Mexico released on Helicon Records. These performances mark the debut of the New York Philharmonic String Quartet.

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Repertoire

John Adams (b. 1947) got the idea for his 2012 work *Absolute Jest* for string quartet and orchestra after hearing Michael Tilson Thomas lead the San Francisco Symphony in a performance of Stravinsky's *Pulcinella*. Knowing he had committed to writing something for that orchestra's centennial, he writes that in hearing that work, "I was suddenly stimulated by the way Stravinsky had absorbed musical artifacts from the past and worked them into his own highly personal language." Having loved Beethoven's string quartets since he was a teenager, he used fragments of Opus 131, Opus 135, the *Große Fuge*, and a "few more familiar 'tattoos' from his symphonic scherzos" as the basis for *Absolute Jest*. Adams recalls that writing for the unusual combination of string quartet and orchestra was especially challenging: "The act of composing the work (one that took nearly a year of work) was the most extended experience in pure 'invention' that I've ever undertaken. Its creation was for me a thrilling lesson in counterpoint, in thematic transformation and formal design. The 'jest' of the title should be understood in terms of its Latin meaning, *gesta*: doings, deeds, exploits. I like to think of 'jest' as indicating an exercising of one's wit by means of imagination and invention." These performances mark the Philharmonic's first of *Absolute Jest*.

The title of **John Adams's** 1985 work *Harmonielehre*, which could be translated as "study on harmony," is borrowed from Arnold Schoenberg's 1911 treatise on the tonal system, which Schoenberg was poised to abandon in his own compositions. This lush and deeply tonal work combines Romantic expression with Minimalist gestures, and alludes to the grand scale and emotional depth of *fin de siècle* Romanticism as practiced by the young Schoenberg, among others. At the same time, the piece creates a series of images that constitute an exploration of the search for "harmony" in a broader sense: the melancholy second movement, for example, is inspired by the mythological symbol of a wound that can never be healed, while the third movement suggests the bliss of the perfect, celestial harmony sought by Medieval mystics. The New York Philharmonic first performed *Harmonielehre* in March 1987, led by Leonard Slatkin; the most recent performance was given in November 2010 at Carnegie Hall, led by Alan Gilbert.

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These concerts are made possible with generous support by **The Fan Fox and Leslie R. Samuels Foundation**.

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The EUROPE / SPRING 2017 tour is sponsored by **J.C. Flowers & Co.**

Generous support is provided by **Marie-Josée and Henry Kravis**.

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Support for Young People's Concerts is provided by **The Theodore H. Barth Foundation**.

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Programs are supported, in part, by public funds from the **New York City Department of Cultural Affairs** in partnership with the **City Council**, the **National Endowment for the Arts**, and the **New York State Council on the Arts**, with the support of Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Legislature.

Tickets

Single tickets for this performance start at \$29. Tickets for Open Rehearsals are \$20. Tickets may be purchased online at 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 \$18 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.)

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

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New York Philharmonic

David Geffen Hall at Lincoln Center

Thursday, March 9, 2017, 7:30 p.m.

Open Rehearsal — 9:45 a.m.

Friday, March 10, 2017, 2:00 p.m.

Saturday, March 11, 2017, 8:00 p.m.

Alan Gilbert, conductor

New York Philharmonic String Quartet*

John ADAMS

Absolute Jest

John ADAMS

Harmonielehre

* *denotes New York Philharmonic debut*

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