Stravinsky’s
The Rite of Spring

Alan Gilbert and the
New York Philharmonic
2012–13 Season
Alan Gilbert has said that every concert should be an event, a philosophy that pervades the New York Philharmonic’s programs week after week. Twelve of these concerts are captured live in *Alan Gilbert and the New York Philharmonic: 2012–13 Season*, demonstrating the excitement surrounding the Orchestra as the Music Director enters the fourth year of his tenure.

About his rapport with the Philharmonic players, Alan Gilbert has said: “The chemistry between the Orchestra and me is ever-evolving and deepening. It is a great joy to make music with these incredible musicians and to share what we have to offer with the audience in a very palpable, visceral, and potent way.”

These high-quality recordings of almost 30 works, available internationally, reflect Alan Gilbert’s wide-ranging interests and passions, from Bach’s B-minor Mass to brand-new music by Christopher Rouse. The bonus content includes audio recordings of the Music Director’s occasional onstage commentaries, program notes published in each concert’s Playbill, and encores performed by today’s leading soloists — all in the highest audio quality available for download.

For more information about the series, visit [nyphil.org/recordings](http://nyphil.org/recordings).

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**STRAVINSKY (1882–1971)**

*Le Sacre du printemps (The Rite of Spring)* (1911–12) 35:19

The Adoration of the Earth

Introduction

The Augurs of Spring (Dances of the Young Girls)

Ritual of Abduction

Spring Rounds

Ritual of the Rival Tribes

Dance of the Earth

The Sacrifice

Introduction

Mystic Circles

Glorification of the Chosen One

Evocation of the Ancestors

Ritual Action of the Ancestors

Sacrificial Dance
Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* is an iconic work that changed the course of music. The challenge now is to make it as fresh as when it was premiered. We have all heard about the riot it provoked when it was first performed, and although today we don't have riots around *The Rite of Spring*, we can understand why it was so shocking, provocative, and unusual in 1913. This piece is a thrill and a joy every time you play it — there's something about it that never gets old. One doesn't only need to overcome its rhythmic complexities, which many orchestras can master, but you have to find the color and to bring the story alive in a way that is powerfully pictorial. I really enjoyed performing it with the New York Philharmonic for the first time; these musicians are capable of playing sounds that range from the most gossamer to the most brutal, rough, and aggressive, all of which are needed for *The Rite of Spring*. 
Notes on the Program
By James M. Keller, Program Annotator

Le Sacre du printemps (The Rite of Spring)
Igor Stravinsky

Igor Stravinsky, son of an esteemed bass singer at St. Petersburg's Mariinsky Theatre, received a firm grounding in composition from Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, with whom he studied from 1902 until the elder composer's death, in 1908. Stravinsky achieved several notable works during those student years, but his breakthrough resulted from a string of collaborations with the ballet impresario Sergei Diaghilev, whose Ballets Russes, launched in Paris in 1909, became identified with the cutting edge of the European arts scene. Their first project together was modest: a pair of Chopin orchestrations for the 1909 Ballets Russes production of Les Sylphides. It was a success, but some critics complained that the troupe's choreographic and scenic novelty was not matched by its conservative musical selection. Diaghilev set about addressing this by commissioning new ballet scores, of which the very first was Stravinsky's Firebird, premiered in 1910. Thus began a partnership that gave rise to some of the most irreplaceable items in the history of stage music. The theater was appropriately elegant (and remains so) although its decorative appointments were very up-to-date in 1913, enough to alarm a public accustomed to imbibing culture in neo-Renaissance surroundings. The theater's initial bout of programming was far from scurrilous (though the mid-May premiere of Debussy's Jeux caused anxiety through its suggestions of a ménage à trois), and when the spring season concluded with the "saison russe" of opera and ballet, Diaghilev's productions alternated with the premiere performances of Fauré's opera Pénélope, on a double bill with a ballet setting of Debussy's Nocturnes, both of which tempered their adventurous ideas with an overriding lyricism.

By May 29 the audience was ready to let loose, and it had been prepared to do so by advance press reports that ensured a sellout and primed the pumps of Parisian cultural gossip. A press release reprinting in several Paris newspapers on the day of the premiere tantalized through references to "stammerings of a semi-savage humanity" and "frenetic human clusters wrenched incessantly by the most astonishing polyrhythm ever to come from the mind of a musician," promising "a new thrill which will surely raise passionate discussions, but which will leave all true artists with an unforgettable impression." Cognoscenti already knew that Stravinsky's score had perplexed the enormous orchestra in the course of its 17 rehearsals — not counting its rehearsals with the dancers. Even Diaghilev's ballet master, Enrico Cecchetti, proclaimed,

I think the whole thing has been done by four idiots: First, M. Stravinsky, who wrote the music. Second, M. [Nicholas] Roerich, who designed the scenery and costumes. Third, M. [Vaslav] Nijinsky, who composed the dances. Fourth, M. Diaghilev, who wasted money on it.

The evening opened with Les Sylphides and closed with Weber's Le Spectre de la rose and Borodin's Dances from Prince Igor. But everybody was really there to witness the second item on the program, and some came ready to participate, arming themselves with whistles. Audible protests apparently accompanied the performance from the opening bars, but things stayed somewhat under control until halfway into

The Work at a Glance

The initial scenario for Le Sacre du printemps was created jointly by Stravinsky and scenic designer Nicholas Roerich (a controversial figure who later emigrated to New York, and whose work is celebrated to this day at the Nicholas Roerich Museum on West 107th Street in Manhattan). This is how they described the ballet they envisioned:

Le Sacre du printemps is a musical choreographic work. It represents pagan Russia and is unified by a single idea: the mystery and great surge of creative power of Spring. The piece has no plot, but the choreographic sequence is as follows:

PART ONE: THE ADORATION OF THE EARTH
The Spring celebration. The pipers pipe and young men tell fortunes. The old woman enters. She knows the mystery of nature and how to predict the future. Young girls with painted faces come in from the river in single file. They dance the Spring dances. Games start. The Spring Korovod [a stately dance]. The people divide into two opposed groups. The holy procession of the wise old men. The oldest and wisest interrupts the Spring games, which come to a stop. The people pause trembling before the Great Action. The old men bless the earth. The Kiss of the Earth. The people dance passionately on the earth, sanctifying it and becoming one with it.

PART TWO: THE SACRIFICE
At night the virgins hold mysterious games, walking in circles. One of the virgins is consecrated as the victim and is twice pointed to by fate, being caught twice in the perpetual circle of walking-rounds. The virgins honor her, the Chosen One, with a marital dance. They invoke the ancestors and entrust the Chosen One to the old wise men. She sacrifices herself in the presence of the old men in the Great Sacred Dance, the great sacrifice.
In the Artist’s Words

The opening bassoon solo [in Le Sacre du printemps] should not be virtuosic; it is about purity of sound, creating a mood, and keeping the rhythm accurate. The main issue concerns setting a mood.

The work was written as a ballet, with the orchestra in the pit; Stravinsky set the passage in the instrument’s high register, and may not have wanted anyone to know what instrument was playing it. One thinks about playing the opening softly, calmly, with a purity of sound, to create a mystical atmosphere from which the rest of the piece can develop. The challenge is in your head, not in your fingers.

— Judith LeClair
Philharmonic Principal Bassoon
New York Philharmonic

ALAN GILBERT
Music Director
The Yoko Nagae Cecchina Chair

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Joshua Weilerstein
Assistant Conductors

Leonard Bernstein
Laureate Conductor, 1943–1990

Kurt Masur
Music Director Emeritus

VIOLINS
Glenn Dicterow
Concertmaster
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Sheryl Staples
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THE NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC USES THE REVOLVING SEATING METHOD FOR SECTION STRING PLAYERS WHO ARE LISTED ALPHABETICALLY IN THE ROSTER.
New York Philharmonic Music Director Alan Gilbert, The Yoko Nagae Ceschina Chair, began his tenure in September 2009. The New York Times has said: “Those who think classical music needs some shaking up routinely challenge music directors at major orchestras to think outside the box. That is precisely what Alan Gilbert did.” The first native New Yorker to hold the post, he has sought to make the Orchestra a point of civic pride for the city and country.

Mr. Gilbert combines works in fresh and innovative ways; has forged important artistic partnerships, introducing the positions of The Marie-Josée Kravis Composer-in-Residence and The Mary and James G. Wallach Artist-in-Residence; and introduced an annual multi-week festival and CONTACT!, the new-music series. In 2012–13, he conducts world premieres; presides over a cycle of Brahms’s complete symphonies and concertos; continues The Nielsen Project, the multi-year initiative to perform and record the Danish composer’s symphonies and concertos; conducts Bach’s Mass in B minor and an all-American program, including Ives’s Fourth Symphony; and leads the Orchestra on the EUROPE / SPRING 2013 tour. The season concludes with June Journey: Gilbert’s Playlist, four programs showcasing themes and ideas that Alan Gilbert has introduced, including the season finale: a theatrical reimagining of Stravinsky ballets, directed and designed by Doug Fitch and featuring New York City Ballet Principal Dancer Sara Mearns. Last season's highlights included performances of three Mahler symphonies, including the Second, Resurrection, on A Concert for New York; tours to Europe (including the Orchestra’s first International Associates residency at London’s Barbican Centre) and California; and Philharmonic 360, the Philharmonic and Park Avenue Armory’s acclaimed spatial-music program featuring Stockhausen’s Gruppen, building on the success of previous seasons’ productions of Ligeti’s Le Grand Macabre and Janáček’s The Cunning Little Vixen, each acclaimed in 2010 and 2011, respectively, as New York magazine’s number one classical music event of the year.

In September 2011 Alan Gilbert became Director of Conducting and Orchestral Studies at The Juilliard School, where he is the first to hold the William Schuman Chair in Musical Studies. Conductor of the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra and Principal Guest Conductor of Hamburg’s NDR Symphony Orchestra, he regularly conducts leading ensembles such as the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Amsterdam’s Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, and Berlin Philharmonic.

Alan Gilbert’s acclaimed 2008 Metropolitan Opera debut, leading John Adams’s Doctor Atomic, received a 2011 Grammy Award for Best Opera Recording. Earlier releases garnered Grammy Award nominations and top honors from the Chicago Tribune and Gramophone magazine. Mr. Gilbert studied at Harvard University, The Curtis Institute of Music, and Juilliard and was assistant conductor of The Cleveland Orchestra (1995–97). In May 2010 he received an Honorary Doctor of Music degree from Curtis, and in December 2011 he received Columbia University’s Ditson Conductor’s Award for his commitment to performing American and contemporary music.
Founded in 1842 by a group of local musicians led by American-born Ureli Corelli Hill, the New York Philharmonic is by far the oldest symphony orchestra in the United States, and one of the oldest in the world. It currently plays some 180 concerts a year, and on May 5, 2010, gave its 15,000th concert — a milestone unmatched by any other symphony orchestra.

Alan Gilbert began his tenure as Music Director in September 2009, the latest in a distinguished line of musical giants that has included Lorin Maazel (2002–09); Kurt Masur (Music Director 1991–2002; Music Director Emeritus since 2002); Zubin Mehta (1978–91); Pierre Boulez (1971–77); and Leonard Bernstein (appointed Music Director in 1958; given the lifetime title of Laureate Conductor in 1969).

Since its inception the Orchestra has championed the new music of its time, commissioning or premiering many important works, such as Dvořák’s Symphony No. 9, From the New World; Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 3; Gershwin’s Concerto in F; and Copland’s Connotations, in addition to the U.S. premieres of works such as Beethoven’s Symphonies Nos. 8 and 9 and Brahms’s Symphony No. 4. This pioneering tradition has continued to the present day, with works of major contemporary composers regularly scheduled each season, including John Adams’s Pulitzer Prize– and Grammy Award–winning On the Transmigration of Souls; Melinda Wagner’s Trombone Concerto; Wynton Marsalis’s Swing Symphony (Symphony No. 3); Christopher Rouse’s Odna Zhizn’; John Corigliano’s One Sweet Morning, for mezzo-soprano and orchestra; Magnus Lindberg’s Piano Concerto No. 2; and, as of the end of the 2011–12 season, 14 works in CONTACT!, the new-music series.

The roster of composers and conductors who have led the Philharmonic includes such historic figures as Theodore Thomas, Antonín Dvořák, Gustav Mahler (Music Director, 1909–11), Otto Klemperer, Richard Strauss, Willem Mengelberg (Music Director, 1922–30), Wilhelm Furtwängler, Arturo Toscanini (Music Director, 1928–36), Igor Stravinsky, Aaron Copland, Bruno Walter (Music Advisor, 1947–49), Dimitri Mitropoulos (Music Director, 1949–58), Klaus Tennstedt, George Szell (Music Advisor, 1969–70), and Erich Leinsdorf.

Long a leader in American musical life, the Philharmonic has become renowned around the globe, having appeared in 431 cities in 63 countries on five continents. In October 2009 the Orchestra, led by Music Director Alan Gilbert, made its Vietnam debut at the Hanoi Opera House. In February 2008 the musicians, led by then-Music Director Lorin Maazel, gave a historic performance in Pyongyang, DPRK, earning the 2008 Common Ground Award for Cultural Diplomacy. In 2012 the Orchestra became an International Associate of London’s Barbican. Highlights of the EUROPE / SPRING 2013 tour include a performance of Magnus Lindberg’s Kraft at Volkswagen’s Die Gläserne Manufaktur (The Transparent Factory) in Dresden and the Philharmonic’s first appearance in Turkey in 18 years.

The New York Philharmonic, a longtime media pioneer, began radio broadcasts in 1922 and is currently represented by The New York Philharmonic This Week — syndicated nationally 52 weeks per year and available at nyphil.org. Its television presence has continued with annual appearances on Live From Lincoln Center on PBS, and in 2003 it made history as the first orchestra ever to perform live on the Grammy Awards. Since 1917 the Philharmonic has made almost 2,000 recordings, and in 2004 it became the first major American orchestra to offer downloadable concerts, recorded live. The Philharmonic’s self-produced recordings continue with Alan Gilbert and the New York Philharmonic: 2012–13 Season.

The Orchestra has built on its long-running Young People’s Concerts to develop a wide range of education programs, including the School Partnership Program, which enriches music education in New York City, and Learning Overtures, which fosters international exchange among educators and has already reached as far as Japan, South Korea, Venezuela, and Finland.

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Recording and Mastering Engineer: Lawrence Rock

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Alan Gilbert, Music Director, holds The Yoko Nagae Ceschina Chair.

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