NEW YORK, NY, JANUARY 14, 2015 — Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts and the New York Philharmonic today announced plans for the two organizations to collaborate on a new, multi-year opera initiative to present fully-staged productions of significant modern operas not yet seen in New York.

This new creative partnership, which will present three opera productions starting in 2015, marks the first collaboration for opera between the artistic teams of Lincoln Center and the New York Philharmonic. It also illustrates a growing relationship between the two organizations, represented by last season’s co-presentation of Marino Formenti’s recital during the inaugural NY PHIL BIENNIAL and this season’s recital with the Philharmonic’s Mary and James G. Wallach Artist-in-Residence Lisa Batiashvili. Collaborative efforts also extend to plans to redevelop Avery Fisher Hall.

Lincoln Center initiated discussions about this partnership with the New York Philharmonic in the summer of 2013, recognizing that both institutions have strong commitments to opera presentations, especially with a focus on new repertoire and innovative productions. The organizations will pool their collective artistic and financial resources, and will collaborate on all artistic decisions, such as repertoire, directors, conductors, casting and design, as well as the marketing and fundraising efforts, to realize these artistic visions.

Each of the first two operas selected to be produced as a result of this new partnership will be receiving its first stagings in the United States. The Lincoln Center–New York Philharmonic collaboration will launch with the American stage premiere of George Benjamin’s Written on Skin, at Lincoln Center’s Mostly Mozart Festival, August 11, 13, and 15, 2015. This presentation, a revival of Katie Mitchell’s acclaimed production which was premiered at the Aix-en-Provence Festival in 2012, will take place at the David H. Koch Theater. It will be conducted by New York Philharmonic Music Director Alan Gilbert leading the Mahler Chamber Orchestra.
Orchestra. The cast will include Barbara Hannigan, Christopher Purves, and Victoria Simmonds, who are reprising their roles from the Aix production, as well as Tim Mead and Robert Murray.

The second presentation is the American stage premiere of the Irish composer Gerald Barry’s opera *The Importance of Being Earnest*, based on Oscar Wilde’s comedy. This production, which was premiered at the Royal Opera House in London, is directed by Ramin Gray and will be conducted by Ilan Volkov leading New York Philharmonic musicians. This New York production brings together most of the original Royal Opera House cast including Simon Wilding, Benedict Nelson, Paul Curievici, Stephanie Marshall, Alan Ewing, Hilary Summers, and Ida Falk Winland. An additional cast member will be announced at a later date. It will be presented June 2 and 4, 2016, jointly as part of the second NY PHIL BIENNIAL and Lincoln Center’s 50th season of *Great Performers* at the Rose Theater at Jazz at Lincoln Center.

A third production, slated for 2017, will be announced at a later date. Information about each opera follows below.

Said Jane Moss, Lincoln Center’s Ehrenkranz Artistic Director: “Working with the New York Philharmonic to bring acclaimed new operas and production to New York is a dream come true for me, and the works presented through this initiative are certain to make a significant contribution to the vibrancy and scope of New York’s musical life. Sharing artistic and financial resources enables the New York Philharmonic and Lincoln Center to dramatically extend our individual artistic reach. And our opera collaboration is certain to generate other dynamic programming possibilities, as well as set the stage for the launch of a transformed Avery Fisher Hall. Creating synergistic constituent relationships was an integral part of the founding vision of Lincoln Center, and the artistic and musical rewards of our partnership fully realize that ambition.”

Said Alan Gilbert, New York Philharmonic Music Director: “I have always believed that collaborating with inspired artists and organizations helps achieve great things, and so am already enjoying this fantastic creative partnership with Jane Moss and her team at Lincoln Center to stage ambitious operas. I had been wanting to present Benjamin’s *Written on Skin*, and this is the perfect context for it, and I’m so pleased that Barry’s *The Importance of Being Earnest* will be a highlight of the 2016 NY PHIL BIENNIAL, another initiative of which I’m extremely proud. This new collaboration will allow the realization of creative ideals that have been important to me since coming to the Philharmonic — the sky’s the limit in terms of the productions of bold, modern operas that can come out of it.”

At this time, access to tickets for *Written on Skin* and *The Importance of Being Earnest* are guaranteed by purchasing a Producers Circle package from Lincoln Center. Email producerscircle@lincolncenter.org or call 212-875-5466 for information. Single tickets will be available for purchase at a later date.
More about the opera productions

Written on Skin (2012)
U.S. stage premiere
An opera in three parts
August 11, 13, and 15, 2015
David H. Koch Theater
Mostly Mozart Festival

Composer: George Benjamin
Libretto: Martin Crimp
Conductor: Alan Gilbert
Director: Katie Mitchell
Mahler Chamber Orchestra

Cast:
Christopher Purves (The Protector)
Barbara Hannigan (Agnès)
Tim Mead (Angel 1 / The Boy)
Victoria Simmonds (Angel 2 / Marie)
Robert Murray (Angel 3 / John)

George Benjamin’s second opera, Written on Skin, is the first opera to be presented as part of the Lincoln Center–New York Philharmonic collaboration and comes to Lincoln Center’s Mostly Mozart Festival in August 2015. Since the opera’s highly acclaimed world premiere, at the Aix-en-Provence Festival in July 2012, it has been staged with continued success under the direction of Katie Mitchell at the Holland Festival and Royal Opera House, among other venues, and was presented in concert in August 2013 at Tanglewood. Reviewing the concert performance, The New York Times hailed the work as “psychologically gripping, emotionally heart-pounding and viscerally satisfying drama.” Written on Skin, commissioned by the Aix-en-Provence Festival, the Royal Opera House, the Nederlandse Opera, the Théâtre du Capitole-Toulouse and the Teatro del Maggio Musicale Fiorentino, has been widely regarded as a modern masterpiece and a successor to such 20th century classics as Berg’s Wozzeck and Debussy’s Pelléas and Mélisande. George Benjamin’s first opera, Into the Little Hill, had its U.S. premiere at the Lincoln Center Festival in 2007.

With a libretto by Martin Crimp, who collaborated with Benjamin on Into the Little Hill, Written on Skin depicts the 13th-century story by Occitan poet Guillem de Cabestany of a rich and powerful landowner in the Provence region of France who commissions a young artist to write a book about his riches and status. The landowner, referred to as “The Protector” in the piece and portrayed by Christopher Purves, invites The Boy (Tim Mead) to stay with him and his wife, Agnès (Barbara Hannigan), so that he might further celebrate his property. Agnès becomes drawn to the boy, who, unlike her husband, treats her as more than property. An affair ensues, which ends in tragic and shocking consequences for all parties.

In this striking score Benjamin showcases a diverse range of instruments, including a glass harmonica, pebbles, cowbells and mandolins. The opera features a cast of five including three Angels who double as the boy, Agnès’ sister Marie (Victoria Simmonds), and Marie’s husband John (Robert Murray). The
Angels themselves serve to frame the story through a modern lens as a sort of cautionary tale. Crimp also uses a self-narrating device with all of the characters to remind the audience that both the present and the past exist in the piece. This production, directed by Katie Mitchell, further explores the connection between the three main characters and the Angels as interplay between our world and days gone by.

**George Benjamin** studied composition with Olivier Messiaen and piano with Yvonne Loriod. His first orchestral work, *Ringed by the Flat Horizon*, was performed at the BBC Proms when he was only 20, which made him the youngest composer to have an orchestral work performed at a BBC Proms concert. He soon became a major figure in British musical life, curating the first Meltdown Festival at London’s South Bank Centre in 1993 and being the subject of *By George*, a season-long festival of his works given by the London Symphony Orchestra in 2002-03 that featured the premiere of *Shadowlines* with Pierre-Laurent Aimard. In 2006 the chamber opera *Into the Little Hill*, presented at the 2007 Lincoln Center Festival, represented the beginning of a collaboration with playwright Martin Crimp that has since produced *Written on Skin*. Both operas have received world-wide acclaim, and a third will be premiered at London’s Royal Opera House in 2018. In 2013, Benjamin was named the Composer of the Year by *Musical America*. The composer is a CBE, *Commandeur dans l'ordre des Arts et des Lettres* and an Honorary Member of the Royal Philharmonic Society. He lives in London, and since 2001 has been the Henry Purcell Professor of Composition at King’s College, London.

**Martin Crimp**’s work is known for its theatrically experimental form, emotionally dry dialogue, and bleak view of modern society. His professional career began in the 1980s with the staging of his first play, *Living Remains*, at one of London’s fringe venues, the Orange Tree Theater. He later took positions as Writer-in-Residence at New Dramatists in New York, and the Royal Court Theatre, becoming a central figure in Britain’s new writing scene after performances of his play *No One Sees the Video* in 1990. In New York, Crimp’s work includes the Public Theater production of *The Treatment*, his black comedy portrait of New York City, and his translation of Ionesco’s *The Chairs*, which ran on Broadway and won a 1998 Tony Award for Best Revival of a Play. Crimp is perhaps best known for his play *Attempts on Her Life*, produced at the Royal Court Theatre in 1997 and subsequently translated into twenty languages.

**Katie Mitchell** is known for directing theatrical works that are intense and vivid. A former associate director at the Royal Court Theatre, Mitchell was appointed Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) in the 2009 New Year Honours. She is the author of *The Director’s Craft: A Handbook for the Theatre* (2008, Routledge), has directed numerous films and staged productions, and was awarded the 1996 London Evening Standard Theatre Award for Best Director for her staging of *The Phoenician Women* at the Royal Shakespeare Company. Mitchell’s past productions presented by Lincoln Center include *Waves* in 2008, the U.S. premiere of *One Evening* (a re-imagining of Schubert’s *Winterreise*, with texts by playwright Samuel Beckett) in December 2009, and a production of T.S. Eliot’s *Four Quartets*, presented in December 2009 and reprised in the *White Light Festival* in 2011.

**Alan Gilbert**, the Music Director of the New York Philharmonic since 2009, introduced the positions of Composer-in-Residence, Artist-in-Residence, and Artist-in-Association; CONTACT!, the new-music series; and the NY PHIL BIENNIAL. As *New York* magazine wrote, “The Philharmonic and its music director Alan Gilbert have turned themselves into a force of permanent revolution.” In the 2014–15 season Alan Gilbert conducts World Premieres; Verdi’s Requiem; a staging of Honegger’s *Joan of Arc at the Stake* with Marion Cotillard; Yo-Yo Ma and the Silk Road Ensemble; and a tour of Europe. His Philharmonic-tenure highlights include acclaimed productions of Ligeti’s *Le Grand Macabre*, Janáček’s *The Cunning Little Vixen*, Stephen Sondheim’s *Sweeney Todd* starring Bryn Terfel and Emma Thompson, and *Philharmonic 360* at Park
Avenue Armory; World Premieres; the score from *2001: A Space Odyssey* alongside the film; Mahler’s Second Symphony, *Resurrection*, on the tenth anniversary of 9/11; and eight international tours. Mr. Gilbert is Juilliard’s Director of Conducting and Orchestral Studies, Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra’s Conductor Laureate, and Hamburg’s NDR Symphony Orchestra’s Principal Guest Conductor. He regularly conducts leading orchestras around the world and has collaborated on Grammy-winning recordings. His honors include being elected to The American Academy of Arts & Sciences in 2014.

The **Mahler Chamber Orchestra (MCO)**, founded in 1997 by a group of friends, has developed into one of the most artistically interesting and successful ensembles on the classical music scene. An independent international orchestra that plays at the highest level, the MCO is on the move throughout the year. The 45 core members come from 20 different countries and live all over Europe. The orchestra is managed cooperatively by management and board and decisions are made democratically with the participation of all members. The MCO had its breakthrough in the summer of 1998 with a production of Mozart’s *Don Giovanni* under the direction of its founding mentor, Claudio Abbado, at the Festival d’Aix-en-Provence. Alongside Abbado, Daniel Harding is the conductor who has played the most significant role in the orchestra’s history: He has enjoyed a close relationship with the MCO since 1998, and was appointed with the lifetime title Conductor Laureate in 2011. Norwegian pianist Leif Ove Andsnes became the orchestra’s official Artistic Partner in 2012, when he embarked with the MCO on their four-year project “The Beethoven Journey” to perform and record Beethoven’s five piano concertos and Choral Fantasy. Also in 2012, the MCO performed the world premiere of Benjamin’s *Written on Skin* at the Aix-en-Provence Festival, conducted by the composer. Further significant artistic partnerships, in addition to that with composer George Benjamin, include conductors Andris Nelsons and Teodor Currentzis, and the soloists Martha Argerich, Mitsuko Uchida, and Isabelle Faust. For more information, visit mahler-chamber.de/

*Written on Skin* is a production of the Aix-en-Provence Festival, in co-production with the Nederlandse Opera, Amsterdam, Capitol Theatre-Toulouse, and the Royal Opera House, London. It was commissioned by the Aix-en-Provence Festival, the Nederlandse Opera Amsterdam, the Capitol Theatre-Toulouse, the Royal Opera House, London and the Teatro del Maggio Musicale Fiorentino.

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The Importance of Being Earnest (2009–2010)

U.S. stage premiere
An opera in three acts, based on Oscar Wilde’s original text
June 2 and 4, 2016
Rose Theater, Frederick P. Rose Hall, Jazz at Lincoln Center
NY PHIL BIENNIAL / Lincoln Center’s Great Performers series, 50th season

Composer: Gerald Barry
Libretto: Prepared by Gerald Barry
Conductor: Ilan Volkov
Director: Ramin Gray
New York Philharmonic Musicians

Cast:
Simon Wilding (Lane/Merriman)
Benedict Nelson (Algernon Moncrieff)
Paul Curievici (John Worthing)
Stephanie Marshall (Gwendolyn Fairfax)
Alan Ewing (Lady Bracknell)
Hilary Summers (Miss Prism)
Ida Falk Winland (Cecily Cardew)
To be announced (The Rev. Canon Chasuble, D.D.)

Jointly commissioned by the Los Angeles Philharmonic and the Barbican in London, Gerald Barry’s modern masterpiece opera comedy, The Importance of Being Earnest, has received high praise by critics following performances with the Los Angeles Philharmonic in 2011, at the Barbican in 2012, at the Opera National de Lorraine in March of 2013, and at the Royal Opera House in London in June of 2013. The Royal Opera House production will be re-mounted at Lincoln Center. These performances, with conductor Ilan Volkov leading a chamber orchestra of musicians from the New York Philharmonic and the original Royal Opera House cast, will be presented jointly as part of the 2016 NY PHIL BIENNIAL and Lincoln Center’s 50th season of Great Performers.

Capitalizing on what he deems the “ruthless ecstasy” in Oscar Wilde’s play, Barry’s take on The Importance of Being Earnest is characterized by an intensity that heightens both the comedy and the seriousness of the source material. By juxtaposing the extreme isolation of each of the characters with absurdist twists, such as casting Lady Bracknell as a bass (Alan Ewing), Barry highlights the frenetic strength of Wilde’s story even as he strips the play of two-thirds of its text to create the libretto for the piece. The three-act, 90-minute work, which took eight months to create, borrows from pre-existing sources including an opening that features an atonal version of “Auld Lang Syne” and Lady Bracknell’s rendition of “Ode to Joy” resulting in what The Guardian (UK) deems “that rarest of things in contemporary music, a genuinely comic opera.” Joining Mr. Ewing in the cast are Simon Wilding as Lane/Merriman; Benedict Nelson as Algernon Moncrieff; Paul Curievici as John Worthing; Stephanie Marshall as Gwendolyn Fairfax; Hilary Summers as Miss Prism; and Ida Falk Winland as Cecily Cardew. The role of The Rev. Canon Chasuble, D.D. will be announced at a later date.
Gerald Barry was born in Ireland in 1952. His time in Germany with Karlheinz Stockhausen and Mauricio Kagel proved to be a liberating experience and he soon came to public attention in 1979 with two radical works “_____” and “Ø”. Barry’s surreal, virtuosic music is unmistakable in his five operas and wide body of works for ensemble, orchestra, and choir. Recent works include Feldman’s Six-Penny Editions written for the London Sinfonietta and Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, and a Piano Concerto for Nicolas Hodges jointly commissioned by the Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks and the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra. His most recent opera, The Importance of Being Earnest, was commissioned by the Los Angeles Philharmonic and the Barbican, and first presented, to huge acclaim, in the concert hall. It received the 2013 Royal Philharmonic Society Award for Large-Scale Composition. A recording from the London performance with the Birmingham Contemporary Music Group conducted by Thomas Adès was released on NMC in 2014. Upcoming works include a full length opera, Alice’s Adventures Under Ground.

Ramin Gray is the Artistic Director of the Actors Touring Company, based in the United Kingdom, and has led operatic and theatrical productions over the course of his career. Born in London, Gray has led productions in his home country at such as organizations as the Royal Shakespeare Company, the Theatre Downstairs, and the Royal Court (where he served as International Associate, and later as Associate Director). He has also led works at the Salzburg Festival, the Volkstheater Wien, and Moscow’s Pratika Theatre. Apart from theater, Gray directed Benjamin Britten’s Death in Venice at the Hamburg State Opera in 2009, which was also staged at Theater an der Wien. Additionally, he directed the European premiere of Brett Dean’s Bliss at the Hamburg State Opera. Most recently, Gray led the production of Barry’s The Importance of Being Earnest at the Royal Opera House.

A frequent guest with leading orchestras worldwide, conductor Ilan Volkov works regularly with a wide range of ensembles and Festivals, including BBC Symphony Orchestra, Stuttgart Opera, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, SWR Sinfonieorchester Freiburg, Utah Symphony, Salzburg Festival, BBC Proms, and Lucerne Festival. Since the 2011-12 season, Volkov has been Music Director and Principal Conductor of the Iceland Symphony Orchestra, where he helped open Harpa, Reykjavik’s visually striking new concert hall. In March 2012, he curated and directed a three-day festival of contemporary music, “Tectonics,” exploring works by Icelandic composers. Equally active in the opera house as in the concert hall, Volkov has conducted Tchaikovsky’s Eugene Onegin for San Francisco Opera, Britten’s A Midsummer Night’s Dream at the Glyndebourne Festival, Britten’s Peter Grimes for Washington National Opera, and, most recently, Kurt Weill’s Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny for Toulouse Opera and Bartók’s Duke Bluebeard’s Castle with the Israeli Opera.

The Importance of Being Earnest is a production of the Royal Opera House, London. The opera was commissioned by the Los Angeles Philharmonic and the Barbican Centre, London.

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Jane Moss, Lincoln Center’s Vice President of Programming since 1992, was named Ehrenkranz Artistic Director of Lincoln Center in 2011, a position which includes her role as Artistic Director of the Mostly Mozart Festival. In that capacity, she has initiated and led the transformation and expansion of the Festival into a multidisciplinary, multilayered, and far-reaching exploration of its namesake genius and his influence on succeeding generations. Ms. Moss has also created several major new initiatives at Lincoln Center including the international, multi-genre Lincoln Center Festival, the New Visions series—which links the worlds of the theater and classical music—and Lincoln Center’s American Songbook series, which focuses on classic and contemporary expressions of American song. In the fall of 2010 she launched the multidisciplinary White Light Festival, focused on exploring the many dimensions of transcendence and our interior lives as expressed by a dynamic, international spectrum of distinctive musical, dance and theater artists. The programming she has introduced and directs represents a continuing contribution to the vitality of New York’s cultural landscape. Ms. Moss also oversees Great Performers, Lincoln Center’s major season-long classical music series; Midsummer Night Swing; and the free Lincoln Center Out of Doors summer series. Ms. Moss has played an important role as an innovator in musical and music-based presentation and is a recipient of the French Order of the Legion of Honor.

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Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts (LCPA) serves three primary roles: presenter of artistic programming, national leader in arts and education and community relations, and manager of the Lincoln Center campus. A presenter of more than 3,000 free and ticketed events, performances, tours, and educational activities annually, LCPA offers 15 series, festivals, and programs including American Songbook, Avery Fisher Artist Program, Great Performers, Lincoln Center Festival, Lincoln Center Out of Doors, Midsummer Night Swing, Martin E. Segal Awards, Meet the Artist, Mostly Mozart Festival, Target Free Thursdays, and the White Light Festival, as well as the Emmy Award–winning Live From Lincoln Center, which airs nationally on PBS. As manager of the Lincoln Center campus, LCPA provides support and services for the Lincoln Center complex and 11 resident organizations: The Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, The Film Society of Lincoln Center, Jazz at Lincoln Center, The Juilliard School, Lincoln Center Theater, The Metropolitan Opera, New York City Ballet, New York Philharmonic, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, the School of American Ballet, and Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts. For more information: aboutlincolncenter.org.

The New York Philharmonic plays a leading cultural role in New York City, the United States, and the world. This season’s projects will connect the Philharmonic with up to 50 million music lovers through live concerts in New York City and on its worldwide tours; digital downloads; international broadcasts on television, radio, and online; and as a resource through its wide range of education programs. Having commissioned and/or premiered works by leading composers from every era, the Orchestra now champions contemporary music through CONTACT! and the NY PHIL BIENNIAL. A resource for its community and the world, the Philharmonic complements its annual free citywide Concerts in the Parks with wide-ranging education programs, including the famed Young People’s Concerts and the New York Philharmonic Global Academy, partnerships at home and abroad that combine performance with intensive training by Philharmonic musicians to cultivate tomorrow’s leading orchestral musicians. Renowned around the world, having appeared in 432 cities in 63 countries, America’s oldest symphony orchestra has long been a media pioneer, releasing almost 2,000 recordings since 1917 and today sharing live performances through downloads and online. Alan Gilbert became Music Director in 2009, succeeding 20th-century musical giants including Bernstein, Toscanini, and Mahler. For more information on the New York Philharmonic, visit nyphil.org.
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