



Alan Gilbert
Music Director

2009/10 Season News
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**ROB BESSERER TO PERFORM AS ATMOSPHERICIST IN
NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC PRODUCTION OF**

Le Grand Macabre

**BY GYÖRGY LIGETI
MAY 27–29, 2010**

The New York Philharmonic's upcoming production of György Ligeti's 1975–77 opera, *Le Grand Macabre*, will feature the newly-created role of Atmosphericist, to be played by actor/dancer Rob Besserer, in his Philharmonic debut. In this silent role — which was conceived specifically for the production — Mr. Besserer will serve as the performer of the “live animation” taking place on stage, as created by director/designer Doug Fitch. Philharmonic Music Director Alan Gilbert will lead the first complete New York performances of Ligeti's absurdist opera, Thursday, May 27, 2010, at 7:30 p.m., and Friday, May 28, and Saturday, May 29, at 8:00 p.m.

Mr. Fitch, who coined the word “Atmosphericist”— and the character — for the production, explains: “The Atmosphericist is like an alchemist whose job is to orchestrate all of the scenic transformations. We see him animating the world in which the opera takes place, literally manipulating objects that are filmed and projected live to tell our story. He is like a Foley artist, but rather than creating a soundtrack for a movie, he creates the visual track for the opera.”

Rob Besserer is an Obie- and Bessie Award-winning former dancer, who has worked with many choreographers and directors, including Lar Lubovitch Dance Company, Mark Morris Dancer Group, six productions with Martha Clarke, and was a founding member of Mikhail Baryshnikov's White Oak Dance Project. As part of his role in *Le Grand Macabre*, he will manipulate the more than 300 miniature models and sets Mr. Fitch has created that will be filmed live onstage during the performances via two cameras on two filming stations or “toy theaters.” “I put the scenes in front of the characters so that they are able to tell their stories,” says Mr. Besserer, who will be sporting a futuristic-looking
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An “Atmosphericist” for *Le Grand Macabre*/2

earphone and a long green-and-yellow outfit by award-winning costume designer Catherine Zuber. “I set the ‘atmosphere’ in which the story is told. It’s like performing a puppet show within the making of a movie within the performance of an opera.”

According to Edouard Getaz, the producer of *Le Grand Macabre*, Mr. Besserer was chosen not only because he and Doug Fitch knew his work, but particularly because of his impressive appearance in the silent role of Ambrogio in The Metropolitan Opera’s current production of Bartlett Scher’s production of Rossini’s *The Barber of Seville*. In 2011 Mr. Besserer will be featured in Mr. Scher’s new Met production of Rossini’s *Le Comte Ory*. He now calls himself a “movement character actor with extensive dance training.”

Le Grand Macabre, which employs a large cast of singers in addition to the musicians of the Philharmonic, is set in an “anytime” century and follows a character named Nekrotzar — who may or may not represent Death — as he arrives in the fantastical kingdom of Breughelland to announce the end of the world in a city of skyscrapers strewn with litter and populated by vagrants. Nekrotzar encounters a variety of whimsical and grotesque characters, including the drunkard Piet the Pot; Prince Go-Go, Breughelland’s obese boy ruler; the lovers Amanda and Amando; the transvestite astronomer Astradamors and his nymphomaniac wife Mescalina; and a host of others.

“The production is going to be incredible!” declares Mr. Besserer. “What Doug Fitch has done in designing all these miniature sets, along with his drawing and vision, is amazing!”

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Credit Suisse is the Global Sponsor of the New York Philharmonic.

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The *Le Grand Macabre* concert series is sponsored by **American Express**.

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Generous support for the performance of *Le Grand Macabre* is provided by the **Fan Fox and Leslie R. Samuels Foundation**.

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Additional support for the performance of *Le Grand Macabre* is provided by the **Francis Goelet Fund**.

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Programs of the New York Philharmonic are supported, in part, by public funds from the **New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, New York State Council on the Arts**, and the **National Endowment for the Arts**.

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An “Atmosphericist” for *Le Grand Macabre*/3

Single tickets for the performances of *Le Grand Macabre* are \$31 to \$112. Tickets for Pre-Concert Talks are \$5. Tickets for the Open Rehearsal are \$16.00. All tickets may be purchased online at nyphil.org or by calling **(212) 875-5656**, 10:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., Monday through Saturday, and 12:00 noon to 5:00 p.m. on Sunday. Tickets may also be purchased at the **Avery Fisher Hall Box Office** or the **Alice Tully Hall Box Office** at Lincoln Center, Broadway at 65th Street. 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 \$12 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 e-mail her at carrl@nyphil.org.

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An “Atmosphericist” for *Le Grand Macabre*/4

New York Philharmonic

Avery Fisher Hall

Le Grand Macabre

Wednesday, May 26, 2010

Open Rehearsal — 9:45 a.m.

Thursday, May 27, 2010, 7:30 p.m.

Friday, May 28, 2010, 8:00 p.m.

Saturday, May 29, 2010, 8:00 p.m.

Pre-Concert Talk (one hour before each concert) by Pulitzer Prize-winning composer and University Professor at Adelphi University Paul Moravec
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Alan Gilbert, conductor

Doug Fitch, director and designer

Edouard Getaz, producer

Production created by Giants Are Small

Catherine Zuber, costume designer*

Clifton Taylor, lighting designer*

Barbara Hannigan, soprano* (Gepopo)

Kiera Duffy, soprano (Venus)

Jennifer Black, soprano* (Amanda)

Renee Tatum, mezzo-soprano (Amando)

Anthony Roth Costanzo, countertenor* (Prince Go-Go)

Melissa Parks, mezzo-soprano* (Mescalina)

Mark Schowalter, tenor* (Piet the Pot)

Eric Owens, bass-baritone** (Nekrotzar)

Wilbur Pauley, bass (Astradamors)

Peter Tantsits, tenor (The White Minister)

Joshua Bloom, baritone* (The Black Minister)

New York Choral Artists,

Joseph Flummerfelt, conductor

Rob Besserer, Atmosphericist*

Thomas Lee, Atmosphericist Assistant*

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*New York Philharmonic debut

**New York Philharmonic subscription debut