

CENTRAL PARK CONCERT UPDATE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 20, 2008

Contact: Katherine E. Johnson

(212) 875-5718; johnsonk@nyphil.org

For more information: nyphil.org/newsroom

**NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC INVITES ENSEMBLE FROM
OPUS 118 HARLEM SCHOOL OF MUSIC TO PERFORM ONSTAGE PRIOR
TO ORCHESTRA'S CONCERT IN CENTRAL PARK,
TUESDAY, JUNE 24, 2008**

**Founder and Conductor Roberta Guaspari To Lead Ensemble of 20 Children,
Ages 6–14;
School Was Subject of Oscar-Nominated Meryl Streep Film, *Music of the Heart*, and
Oscar-Nominated Documentary, *Small Wonders***

The New York Philharmonic has invited a string ensemble from Opus 118 Harlem School of Music — the school featured in the Oscar-nominated film, *Music of the Heart* and the Oscar-nominated documentary, *Small Wonders* — to perform prior to the Orchestra's concert on the Great Lawn in Central Park on Tuesday, June 24, 2008. Twenty children, ages 6 to 14, will play from 7:00 to 7:15 p.m., led by founder and conductor Roberta Guaspari, whom Ms. Streep portrayed in the film. The Philharmonic's concert, which begins at 8:00 p.m., will be conducted by Bramwell Tovey in works by Shostakovich, Mendelssohn, Tchaikovsky, and Sousa. It is the first in the season's *New York Philharmonic Concerts in the Parks, Presented by Didi and Oscar Schafer*.

"The dream of these students is to one day be in an orchestra like the New York Philharmonic," says Nathaniel Sutton, Chairman of Opus 118 Harlem School of Music. "This is the beginning of their dream."

"The New York Philharmonic is delighted to welcome students from the Opus 118 Harlem School of Music to our Central Park stage," says Philharmonic Chairman Paul B. Guenther. "Their success story is one that all New Yorkers should celebrate, and a testament to the power and importance of music education for young people — a commitment wholeheartedly shared by the New York Philharmonic."

About Opus 118 Harlem School of Music

In 1991, the New York City Board of Education made severe budget cuts, which included the elimination of music programs in three Harlem-area schools. Among those cuts was the teaching position of Roberta Guaspari. As a dynamic and devoted teacher, she was

(more)

New York Philharmonic Invites Participation from Opus 118 Harlem School of Music/2

determined to bring the music program back into the schools in addition to restoring her job. With the help of parents, teachers, and volunteers, she raised the necessary funds to reinstate her job and to create Opus 118. Today the school's mission is to provide quality music instruction and teacher development in an environment that nurtures excellence and creativity.

Ms. Guaspari has received numerous awards and honors for her work, including the Petra Foundation's annual award to "recognize and encourage unsung individuals who are making distinctive contributions to human freedom." Former Manhattan Borough President, C. Virginia Fields issued a proclamation recognizing "her dedication in unlocking the potential for academic and artistic achievement in her students." She also received the Heroes for Today Award by *Readers Digest*; the Outstanding Achievement Award by SUNY Fredonia Alumni Association; and the Arison Award in 2003 presented by the National Foundation for Advancement in the Arts for her "significant influence in the development of young American artists." Her personal and inspiring story was depicted in the feature film, *Music of the Heart*, for which Meryl Streep received an Academy Award nomination, and in Allan Miller's Academy Award-nominated documentary, *Small Wonders*.

Upcoming 2008 *New York Philharmonic Concerts in the Parks, Presented by Didi and Oscar Schafer* will take place July 8 at the Richmond County Bank Ballpark, Staten Island; July 9 at PNC Bank Arts Center, Holmdel, New Jersey; July 10 in Cunningham Park, Queens; July 11 in Van Cortlandt Park, Bronx; July 12 in Heckscher State Park, East Islip, Long Island; July 14 in Prospect Park, Brooklyn; and July 15 on The Great Lawn, Central Park.

* * *

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

* * *

The New York Philharmonic Concerts in the Parks are presented by **Didi and Oscar Schafer**. Major support is also provided by **The City of New York, through the Department of Cultural Affairs, Kate D. Levin, Commissioner, and The Starr Foundation**. Additional support is provided by the **Bodman Foundation, Herman Goldman Foundation, Marc Hass Foundation, Victor Herbert Foundation, the Oenslager Endowment Fund, and the Seth Sprague Educational and Charitable Foundation**.

* * *

The Concerts in the Parks are presented in cooperation with the **City of New York Department of Parks and Recreation, Michael R. Bloomberg, Mayor; Adrian Benepe, Commissioner; the five Borough Presidents; and the City Council of New York**. Fireworks by Bay Fireworks in Manhattan, Queens, Brooklyn, the Bronx, and Staten Island. Fireworks by Grucci in Heckscher State Park.

* * *

96.3 FM WQXR is the Radio Home of the New York Philharmonic.

###