

Alan Gilbert
Music Director



THE THOMASHEFSKYS:
*Music and Memories of a Life in the
Yiddish Theater*

Tuesday, April 5, 2011, 7:30 p.m.
15,169th Concert

Wednesday, April 6, 2011, 7:30 p.m.
15,170th Concert

Michael Tilson Thomas,
Conductor and Narrator
Patricia Birch, Director

Starring **Judy Blazer** and
Shuler Hensley and featuring
Ronit Widmann-Levy and
Eugene Brancoveanu

**This concert will last approximately two
and three-quarter hours, which includes one
intermission. Linda Steinberg, Executive
Director of The Thomashefsky Project,
will give a talk one hour prior to
the performance.**

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Home of the New York Philharmonic

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New York Philharmonic

THE THOMASHEFSKYS: Music and Memories of a Life in the Yiddish Theater

Michael Tilson Thomas, Conductor and Narrator
Patricia Birch, Director[†]

Script by Michael Tilson Thomas
Produced in association with The Thomashefsky Project,
Linda Steinberg, Executive Director and Media Designer
Kirk Bookman, Production Supervisor and Lighting Designer
Naomi Zapata, Associate Production Manager
Dona Granata, Costume Consultant
Thomas Edler, Media Coordinator
Deanna Hull, Music Coordinator
Joshua Robison, Executive Producer

Cast

Judy Blazer [†]	Bessie Thomashefsky
Shuler Hensley [†]	Boris Thomashefsky
Ronit Widmann-Levy [†]	Various roles
Eugene Brancoveanu [†]	Various roles

Production

Peter Fitzgerald, Sound Designer	
Domonic Sack, Associate Sound Designer	Rachel Guilfoye, Wardrobe Supervisor
Ed Chapman, Production Sound Mixer	Aaron Kinchen, Hair/Make-up Supervisor
Michael S. LoBue, Production Electrician	Buist Bickley, Props Supervisor
Aland Henderson, Lighting Programmer	

[†] denotes New York Philharmonic debut.

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The photography, sound recording, or videotaping of these performances is prohibited.

Act One

- Joseph RUMSHINSKY** Overture to *Khantshe in Amerike (Khantshe in America)* (1912)
- TRADITIONAL** "A mantl fun alt-tsaytikn shtof" ("A Coat from Old-Time Stuff")
JUDY BLAZER
- Percy GAUNT** "The Bowery" (1892)
- Abraham GOLDFADEN** "Mirele's Romance," from *Koldunye (The Witch)* (1879)
RONIT WIDMANN-LEVY
Overture to *Koldunye*
"Babkelekh," from *Koldunye*
EUGENE BRANCOVEANU
- Giacomo MINKOWSKY** "Vi gefloygn kum ikh vider" ("As If On Wings I Come"),
Lyricist unknown from *Aleksander, der kroyn prints fun yerusholaim (Alexander, Crown Prince of Jerusalem)* (1892)
RONIT WIDMANN-LEVY, EUGENE BRANCOVEANU
- Louis FRIESELL** "Kaddish," from *Der Yeshive bokher (The Yeshiva Student)* (1899)
SHULER HENSLEY
- Arnold PERLMUTTER/
Herman WOHL** Medley from *Dos pintele yid (A Little Spark of Jewishness)* (1909)
Lyrics by Louis Gilrod
& Boris Thomashefsky
"Pintele yid"
"Shtoyst zikh on" ("Give a Guess")
"Bar Mitzvah March"
JUDY BLAZER, SHULER HENSLEY,
RONIT WIDMANN-LEVY, EUGENE BRANCOVEANU

Intermission

Act Two

- PERLMUTTER/
WOHL** Reprise from *Dos pintele yid*
- FRIESELL/
Others** *Greenhorn* Medley (1905–08)
JUDY BLAZER
Lyrics by Isidore Lillian

(continued)

**Nora BAYES/
Jack NORWORTH**

“Who Do You Suppose Married My Sister?
Thomashefsky” (1910)
MICHAEL TILSON THOMAS

RUMSHINSKY

Title Song from *Uptown, Downtown* (1916)

RUMSHINSKY

Lyrics by Isidore Lillian

“Khantshe,” from *Khantshe in Amerike* (1912)
JUDY BLAZER

**PERLMUTTER/
WOHL**

Lyrics by Boris
Thomashefsky

“Lebn zol Columbus” (“Long Live Columbus”), from
Der griner milyoner (The Green Millionaire) (1916)
SHULER HENSLEY, EUGENE BRANCOVEANU

UNKNOWN

Incidental Music from *Minke di dinstmoyd (Minke
the Maid)* (1917)

RUMSHINSKY

Lyricist unknown

Title Song from *Vi mener libn (The Way Men Love)*
(1919)
EUGENE BRANCOVEANU

Musical numbers arranged after the originals by Michael Tilson Thomas, with orchestrations by Michael Tilson Thomas, Bruce Coughlin, and Peter Laurence Gordon.

English lyrics by Ted Thomas and Michael Tilson Thomas.

Video segments designed and produced by Dada. Media consultation by Concept Organization, Inc. First production visuals by Jeff Sugg.

Sound design consultation by Tom Clark and Hal Nishon Soogian.

Readings excerpted from: *Kaddish for a Giant* by Ted Thomas; *Book of My Life* by Boris Thomashefsky; *The Story of My Life: The Sorrow and Joys of a Yiddish Star Actress* by Bessie Thomashefsky; Bessie’s Beauty Column in *The Warheit* newspaper; *Di yidishe bine*, the Thomashefskys’ magazine of *The Jewish Stage*, and *Thomashefski’s Teater Shriftn*, Boris Thomashefsky’s *Writings on Theatre*.

Translations from the Yiddish by Chana Mlotek, Kalman Weiser, Ronald Robboy, Marc Miller, and Dr. Eli Katz.

The Thomashefsky Project acknowledges the significant contribution of the following institutions whose archival materials were used in the research and production of *The Thomashefskys*: New York Public Library, Dorot Jewish Division, New York City; New York Public Library for the Performing Arts at Lincoln Center; New-York Historical Society; Department of Prints, Photographs and Architectural Collections, New York City; Museum of the City of New York; Prints, Drawings and Photograph Collections; YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, New York City; Library of Congress: Music and Film Divisions, Washington, D.C.; Library of Congress: African and Middle Eastern Division; Harvard College Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts; American-Jewish Historical Society, Yiddish Theater Poster Collection, New York City; Brown University Library, Providence, Rhode Island; The Catskills Institute at Brown University; National Yiddish Book Center, Amherst, Massachusetts; Hebrew University, Israel Goor Theatre Archives, Jerusalem; Beth Hatfutoth, Museum of the Diaspora, Tel Aviv; Jabotinsky Institute Archives, Tel Aviv; Jewish Museum of Maryland, Baltimore; Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore; Chicago Historical Society, Chicago; The Pasadena Playhouse, Pasadena, California; the Historic Mayfair Hotel Archives, Los Angeles, and The B&O Railroad Museum, Baltimore.

Film segment courtesy of the National Center for Jewish Film at Brandeis University, Waltham, Massachusetts. Sharon Pucker Rivo, Executive Director.

Audio selections courtesy of the Sound Archives, YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, New York, New York.

Mark Simon, Casting Consultant

Fyvush Finkel, Dialect Assistance

Rachel Guilfoyle, Costume Assistant

Notes on the Program

In his memoir, *Sounds from My Life*, composer Joseph Rumshinsky (1879–1956) wrote:

The situation of the composer in the Yiddish theater in general is a sad one. The world can never get to know his better musical creations, because the whole score — in which the ensembles, serious duets, romances, and the better songs are found — seldom, indeed hardly ever, gets to print And the saddest thing is, as soon as the operetta closes and leaves the stage, the full score withers and dies.

Unfortunately, Rumshinsky was right. Many of the scores have vanished — but not all.

In *The Thomashefskys: Music and Memories of a Life in the Yiddish Theater* you will hear the music of shows that played the theater houses of the Lower East Side in New York and other American cities to which the Thomashefsky troupe traveled in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. To say these are rescued lost treasures is not an exaggeration. For 10 years The Thomashefsky Project has been searching out, reconstructing, and preserving these disintegrating scores. Extant fragments of musical manuscripts, discovered at various archives, have been pieced together and transcribed into a digitized music program on their way to becoming as true a reflection of the original works as possible. And, as the manuscripts contained little or no annotation, it remained for Michael Tilson Thomas to bring them to life — to edit and arrange the material according to his memory of how his grandmother Bessie Thomashefsky, father Ted Thomas, and uncle Harry Thomashefsky performed the numbers

in the living room of his North Hollywood family home in the 1950s.

This quest for the exact flavor of the music, as it reverberated through the theater houses of the Lower East Side a century ago, has remained a priority for Mr. Tilson Thomas. The first time I heard him speak about his grandparents, he pondered on what it might have felt like to be alive at that time and in that place. He quoted from Aaron Copland:

You compose because you want to somehow summarize in some permanent form your most basic feelings about being alive, to set down ... some sort of permanent statement about the way it feels to live now, today. So that when it's all gone, people will be able to go to the artwork of the time and get some sense of what it felt like to be alive in this year.

We hope that *The Thomashefskys* will enable audience members to feel connected to the world of Boris and Bessie Thomashefsky, the world of the fledgling American immigrant, where, as Mr. Tilson Thomas has expressed it, “new unimagined questions were waiting around every glittering corner.”

When *The Thomashefskys* premiered at Carnegie Hall in April 2005, several members of the audience commented that the music didn't “sound Jewish.” This response may be due, in part, to sensibilities nurtured by *Fiddler on the Roof* — Broadway's projection of Sholom Aleichem's village of Anatevka — and to contemporary Klezmer arrangements. It may also be due to unfamiliarity with the basic nature of Jewish music, a secular and sacred heritage in development since early post-Biblical times.

The Ashkenazic (East European) Jews, in particular, created a rich body of melody. They developed liturgical music with Hebrew and Aramaic prayer texts and, in all areas where Jews settled, their minstrels mingled with other music-makers, borrowing and adapting elements from each other. These traveling minstrels, called *badkhnim* (literally, ones who concoct, create, make known), were folk educators as well as entertainers and sang Yiddish songs imbued with meaning. As conditions grew harsher in Tsarist Russia, their songs also took on qualities of consolation and counsel.

European Yiddish theater was officially born only five years before Boris Thomashefsky emigrated to America. Abraham Goldfaden (1840–1908), generally regarded as the “Father of Yiddish Theater,” wrote and presented the first productions in Jassy, Romania, in 1876 (see sidebar on page 29). Having himself been a *badkhen* for many years, he now set out to create a type of Jewish opera or operetta, for which he interwove music from synagogue chants, religious hymns, holiday songs, Hasidic tunes, Yiddish folk songs, Slavic melodies, and European grand opera arias. That such an eclectic recipe would almost immediately be labeled as “Jewish music” is not unusual. The history of Jewish music, as the history of Jewish culture itself, embodies the intermingling of traditional elements with new stylistic influences culled from the worlds in which Jews found themselves. We are talking about a nomadic people, after all.

Boris Thomashefsky writes in his *Autobiography* that, as a boy of five in Kaminska, while learning liturgical numbers from his grandfather, the *Talner Khasn* (Chief Cantor), he was also singing Goldfaden songs. In America, a number of Goldfaden’s operettas became mainstays of Boris Thomashefsky’s early

repertory, including *Koldunye* (*The Witch*, often referred to as a Yiddish Cinderella story), the musical drama chosen by the enterprising 15-year-old for the first presentation of Yiddish theater in America (New York City, 1881). It also includes *Shulamis*, produced in Boston’s Music Hall in 1888 and featuring 15-year-old Bessie Kaufman, who had just run away from home to join Boris Thomashefsky and become a *starke*. Both Boris and Bessie Thomashefsky had great affection for Goldfaden and helped him in his waning years in New York. In 1907, to support the ailing Goldfaden, Boris Thomashefsky agreed to present his last play, *Ben Ami*, at People’s Theater. Rehearsals were still in progress when the Father of Yiddish Theater died. Bessie was at his bedside.

While Goldfaden’s operettas dominated the Thomashefskys’ early repertory, the composer Joseph Rumshinsky wrote the scores for the majority of Boris and Bessie’s later hits (see sidebar on page 29). Rumshinsky was 40 years younger than Goldfaden, born in Vilna in the same year that Boris Thomashefsky premiered *Koldunye* in New York City. Thus he came of age in the 1890s, when there was an already established Yiddish theater and Jewish popular music style. As Mark Slobin, author of *Tenement Songs*, explains:

It was also the heyday of pre-Revolutionary salon and cabaret music in Russia, and all these streams flowed through his musical life. Coming to America in 1906, Rumshinsky became the most prolific and influential of the operetta composers. He lived through the transition from the older European-based plots and musical styles to the advent of the lighter Americanized shows that set popular taste in the 1920s.

The program assembled by Michael Tilson Thomas for *The Thomashefskys* enables us

to travel the distance from Goldfaden to Rumshinsky, to stand on the threshold where sounds of Jewish music entered mainstream American life and gradually evolved into something new.

The themes of the Thomashefskys' productions evolved accordingly over the years — from Biblical tales and nostalgic stories of the old country to the personal and social conflicts of acculturation in America. However, no one season can be called typical, and attempts by historians to label their repertory as *shund* (a somewhat derogatory Yiddish term denoting “popular” as opposed to “seri-

ous” work) are easily refuted. Bessie and Boris Thomashefsky are as difficult to label as their grandson, Michael Tilson Thomas; eclecticism and the quest for new challenges are ever present. Consider the offerings of the Thomashefskys' first season at The Peoples Theater, 1902–03: in addition to two original dramas by Yiddish playwright Leon Kobrin (see sidebar below) dealing with religious subject matter, old world myths, and the immigrant experience, Yiddish versions of the following were presented: Goethe's *Faust*, Hugo's *Hunchback of Notre Dame*, and Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* (with

Images from The Thomashefsky Project



Images courtesy of The Thomashefsky Project/ Michael Tilson Thomas Collection, YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, New York and the Zylbercweig Collection, Israel Goor Theatre Archives, Hebrew University, Jerusalem

Clockwise from top left: Composer Joseph Rumshinsky pictured on the sheet music cover for the title song of Bessie Thomashefsky's 1912 hit “*Khantshe in America*”; Bessie Thomashefsky in the role of a suffragette; Abraham Goldfaden, the “Father of Yiddish Theater”; Yiddish playwright Leon Kobrin, flanked by Boris and Bessie Thomashefsky, reads a new play to the Thomashefsky Company

Boris Thomashefsky playing Mephistopheles, the hunchback, and Romeo, respectively).

Hundreds of manuscripts of dramas and comedies belonging in the Thomashefsky repertory have been found by The Thomashefsky Project, and a number have been translated. In comparing these productions and Boris and Bessie's accomplishments in the context of the broader Yiddish theater scene, some conclusions about their unique contributions can be made.

The first is their dedication to socio-political causes. For them, the theater was a vehicle for social transformation. Between 1912, when Bessie Thomashefsky first appeared in *Khantshe in America*, to 1922, the end of her stint as owner of Bessie Thomashefsky's People's Theater, she produced and starred in more than a dozen plays dealing with women's rights and struggles, such as suffragette causes and unwed motherhood (see sidebar on page 29). As the first Yiddish actress to publish her memoirs and own and operate her own theater, she taught by example. Boris Thomashefsky also never shied away from controversial issues and kept a close eye on current events in Europe. As evidenced by his chronicles of a 1913 trip back to Eastern Europe, his childhood memories of the pogroms were always with him. Until his death, he continued to write plays about victims of anti-Semitism, such as Alfred Dreyfus and Mendel Baylis. A manuscript in the Michael Tilson Thomas Collection, written in Boris's hand, records his eyewitness account of the 1925 trial of Stanislaw Steiger, a Jew falsely accused of attempting to murder the Polish president. In 1933, while most Americans were oblivious to the impending danger of the Third Reich, Boris wrote two plays about Hitler.

Second, Boris and Bessie Thomashefsky's comic plays never lapsed into slapstick or buffoonery. They were quick to expose the foibles of their people, but they did so with affection, wit, and dignity.

Third, their daring programming helped to shape the course of American drama. By importing the works of Ibsen, Hauptmann, Ansky, Chekhov, Wilde, and other avant-garde playwrights, a bridge between the new European theater art forms and the American theater was built for a brief but momentous period.

Finally, whether due to personal magnetism, insight, ability to inspire, or entrepreneurial acumen, they attracted countless authors, composers, actors, musicians, producers, and designers. Together, this creative circle of talent produced plays and operettas that were pioneering products in every sense, reflecting new approaches to scriptwriting, musical composition, choreography, acting, directing, and scenic design. Although this phase of Yiddish theater was short-lived, its influence continued as its participants went on to Broadway, Hollywood, and elsewhere, helping to shape the development of American popular culture.

The story of Boris and Bessie Thomashefsky, Yiddish theater, and the immigrant experience is vast and complicated. No doubt hundreds of tales and melodies still lie dormant among the materials accumulated by The Thomashefsky Project, waiting to be brought to life in the years ahead. Meanwhile, *The Thomashefskys* is, in the words of its host, offered to you as "an affectionate introduction."

Linda Steinberg is Executive Director of The Thomashefsky Project.

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New York Philharmonic

2010–2011 SEASON

ALAN GILBERT, *Music Director, The Yoko Nagae Ceschina Chair*

Daniel Boico, *Assistant Conductor*

Leonard Bernstein, *Laureate Conductor, 1943–1990*

Kurt Masur, *Music Director Emeritus*

VIOLINS

Glenn Dicterow
Concertmaster
The Charles E. Culpeper
Chair

Sheryl Staples
Principal Associate
Concertmaster
The Elizabeth G. Beinecke
Chair

Michelle Kim
Assistant Concertmaster
The William Petschek
Family Chair

Enrico Di Cecco
Carol Webb
Yoko Takebe

Minyoung Chang+
Hae-Young Ham
The Mr. and Mrs. Timothy
M. George Chair

Lisa GiHae Kim
Kuan-Cheng Lu
Newton Mansfield
The Edward and Priscilla
Pilcher Chair

Kerry McDermott+
Anna Rabinova

Charles Rex
The Shirley Bacot Shamel
Chair

Fiona Simon
Sharon Yamada
Elizabeth Zeltser
The William and Elfriede
Ulrich Chair

Yulia Ziskel

Marc Ginsberg
Principal

Lisa Kim*
In Memory of Laura Mitchell
Soohyun Kwon
The Joan and Joel I. Pickett
Chair

Duoming Ba

Marilyn Dubow
The Sue and Eugene
Mercy, Jr. Chair

Martin Eshelman
Quan Ge

Judith Ginsberg
Stephanie Jeong
The Gary W. Parr Chair

Hanna Lachert
Hyunju Lee
Joo Young Oh
Daniel Reed
Mark Schmoockler
Na Sun
Vladimir Tsypin

VIOLAS

Cynthia Phelps
Principal
The Mr. and Mrs. Frederick
P. Rose Chair

Rebecca Young*
Irene Breslaw**
The Norma and Lloyd
Chazen Chair
Dorian Rence

Katherine Greene
The Mr. and Mrs. William J.
McDonough Chair

Dawn Hannay
Vivek Kamath
Peter Kenote
Kenneth Mirkin
Judith Nelson
Robert Rinehart
The Mr. and Mrs. G. Chris
Andersen Chair

CELLOS

Carter Brey
Principal
The Fan Fox and Leslie R.
Samuels Chair

Eileen Moon*
The Paul and Diane
Guenther Chair

The Shirley and Jon
Brodsky Foundation Chair
Evangeline Benedetti

Eric Bartlett
The Mr. and Mrs. James E.
Buckman Chair

Elizabeth Dyson
Maria Kitsopoulos
Sumire Kudo
Qiang Tu
Ru-Pei Yeh

The Credit Suisse Chair
in honor of Paul Calello

Wei Yu
Wilhelmina Smith++

BASSES

Eugene Levinson
Principal
The Redfield D. Beckwith
Chair

Orin O'Brien
Acting Associate Principal
The Herbert M. Citrin Chair

William Blossom
The Ludmila S. and Carl B.
Hess Chair

Randall Butler
David J. Grossman
Satoshi Okamoto

FLUTES

Robert Langevin
Principal
The Lila Acheson Wallace
Chair

Sandra Church*
Mindy Kaufman

PICCOLO

Mindy Kaufman

OBOES

Liang Wang
Principal
The Alice Tully Chair

Sherry Sylar*
Robert Botti
The Lizabeth and Frank
Newman Chair

ENGLISH HORN

The Joan and Joel Smilow
Chair

CLARINETS

Mark Nuccio
Acting Principal
The Edna and W. Van Alan
Clark Chair

Pascual Martinez
Forteza
Acting Associate Principal
The Honey M. Kurtz Family
Chair

Lucia Scalzo++
Amy Zoloto++

E-FLAT CLARINET

Pascual Martinez
Forteza

BASS CLARINET

Amy Zoloto++

BASSOONS

Judith LeClair
Principal
The Pels Family Chair

Kim Laskowski*
Roger Nye
Arlen Fast

CONTRABASSOON

Arlen Fast

HORNS

Philip Myers

*Principal**The Ruth F. and Alan J. Broder Chair*

Stewart Rose++*

Acting Associate Principal

Cara Kizer Aneff**

R. Allen Spanjer

Erik Ralske+

Howard Wall

David Smith++

TRUMPETS

Philip Smith

*Principal**The Paula Levin Chair*

Matthew Muckey*

Ethan Bendorf

Thomas V. Smith

TROMBONES

Joseph Alessi

*Principal**The Gurnee F. and Marjorie L. Hart**Chair*

Amanda Davidson*

David Finlayson

*The Donna and Benjamin M. Rosen**Chair***BASS TROMBONE**

James Markey

*The Daria L. and William C. Foster**Chair***TUBA**

Alan Baer

*Principal***TIMPANI**

Markus Rhoten

*Principal**The Carlos Moseley Chair*

Kyle Zerna**

PERCUSSION

Christopher S. Lamb

*Principal**The Constance R. Hoguet Friends of the Philharmonic Chair*

Daniel Druckman*

*The Mr. and Mrs. Ronald J. Ulrich**Chair*

Kyle Zerna

HARP

Nancy Allen

*Principal**The Mr. and Mrs. William T. Knight III**Chair***KEYBOARD***In Memory of Paul Jacobs***HARPSICHORD**

Lionel Party

PIANO*The Karen and Richard S. LeFrak**Chair*

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STAGE REPRESENTATIVE

Louis J. Patalano

AUDIO DIRECTOR

Lawrence Rock

* Associate Principal

** Assistant Principal

+ On Leave

++ Replacement/Extra

The New York Philharmonic uses the revolving seating method for section string players who are listed alphabetically in the roster.

HONORARY MEMBERS OF THE SOCIETY

Pierre Boulez

Stanley Drucker

Lorin Maazel

Zubin Mehta

Carlos Moseley

The Artists



Michael Tilson Thomas (conductor and narrator) is music director of the San Francisco Symphony, artistic director of the New World Symphony, and principal guest conductor of the London Symphony Orchestra. A Los Angeles native, he began his formal music studies at the University of Southern California, where he studied piano with John Crown and conducting and composition with Ingolf Dahl. He worked with Stravinsky, Boulez, Stockhausen, and Copland on premieres of their works at Los Angeles's Monday Evening Concerts. During this same period he was pianist and conductor for cellist Gregor Piatigorsky and violinist Jascha Heifetz. In 1969, after winning the Koussevitzky Prize at Tanglewood, Mr. Tilson Thomas was appointed assistant conductor of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, and made his New York debut with that orchestra the same year, gaining

international recognition after replacing music director William Steinberg mid-concert. He was music director of the Buffalo Philharmonic (1971–79), a principal guest conductor of the Los Angeles Philharmonic (1981–85), and principal conductor of the London Symphony Orchestra (1987–95). In 1995 he assumed his current post with the San Francisco Symphony. His guest conducting includes appearances with the major orchestras of Europe and the United States.

In 1987 Michael Tilson Thomas created the New World Symphony, a post-graduate orchestral academy based in Miami Beach. In 1991 he and the ensemble were presented in a series of benefit concerts for UNICEF, featuring Audrey Hepburn as narrator in Mr. Tilson Thomas's composition *From the Diary of Anne Frank*. In August 1995 he led the Pacific Music Festival Orchestra in the world premiere of his work *Showa/Shoah*, written in commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima. He has also written song cycles for baritone Thomas Hampson and soprano Renée Fleming. In 2004 Mr. Tilson Thomas and the San Francisco Symphony embarked on a multi-tiered media project, *Keeping Score*, which includes television, Websites, and radio and school programs. In April 2009 he conducted the YouTube Symphony Orchestra in Carnegie Hall; this orchestra was the first orchestra ever assembled by world-wide online auditions.



Judy Blazer (Bessie Thomashefsky) began her career as a young singer in opera, oratorio, and recital in New York City and throughout Italy. She moved into Broadway theater with leading roles in *Me and My Girl*, *A Change in the Heir*, *Titanic*, Neil Simon's *45 Seconds from Broadway*, and, most recently, *LoveMusik*, directed by Harold Prince. Off-Broadway she was featured in *Candide* and *Sweeney Todd* with the New York City Opera, as well as *The House of Bernarda Alba*, *The Torch Bearers*, Lincoln Center's *Hello Again* (Drama Desk nomination), Roundabout's *Hurrah at Last*, and the New York City Center Encores! Production of *Connecticut Yankee*. Regionally she has played the title roles in *Funny Girl* at Sundance Theater; *The Miracle Worker* at George Street Playhouse; *My Fair Lady* at the Paper Mill Playhouse and the 5th Avenue Theatre in Seattle; *Peter Pan* at Artpark; and *The Night Governess* at McCarter Theatre. She has also been seen as Maria in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* at the Long Wharf Theatre, and as Lily Garland in *On the 20th Century* with the American Musical Theatre of San Jose. She has sung at The Metropolitan Opera, as a soloist in Twyla Tharp's *Everlast* with American Ballet Theatre, and she has performed in concert at Lincoln Center. She has been a featured artist on two

PBS specials: *Bernstein's New York* and *In Performance at the White House*.



Shuler Hensley (Boris Thomashefsky) garnered Tony, Drama Desk, Outer Critics Circle, Olivier, and Theatre World awards for his performance as Jud Fry in the internationally acclaimed revival of Rodgers & Hammerstein's *Oklahoma!* He made his Broadway debut as Javert in the long-running musical *Les Misérables*. He also co-starred as Kerchak, head of the Gorilla Tribe, in Disney's *Tarzan*, and starred Off-Broadway in *The Great American Trailer Park Musical*. Most recently, he starred on Broadway as The Monster in Mel Brooks's musical *Young Frankenstein*, and in the world premiere of *Paradise Found*, directed by Harold Prince and Susan Stroman. Mr. Hensley's film credits include *Van Helsing*, in which he portrayed the fabled monster created by author Mary Shelley's Dr. Frankenstein. Most recently he was seen in the feature film *The Legend of Zorro* starring Antonio Banderas and Catherine Zeta-Jones, *Someone Like You*, and *The Bread, My Sweet*. Upcoming film projects include *Opa!* with Matthew Modine, and the independent feature *Cheer the Brave*. Throughout his career, Mr. Hensley has also appeared as guest soloist in numerous concerts, including *The Happy End* by Kurt Weill, at the Queen Elizabeth Hall in London; *The American Songbook: A Tribute to*

Frank Loesser, at Lincoln Center; *Regina*, with Patti LuPone at the Kennedy Center; and the premiere of The Thomashefsky Project, conducted by Michael Tilson Thomas. His television appearances include the recurring role of Bob Arnovitz on NBC's *Ed*; the TNT movie *Monday Night Mayhem*; and appearances on *Law & Order: Criminal Intent* and *Law & Order: Special Victims Unit*. Mr. Hensley attended The Manhattan School of Music and The Curtis School of Music.



Ronit Widmann-Levy (various roles, including Mme. Krantzfeld and Sophie Karp) has received accolades for her operatic and concert performances throughout the world. She has sung in opera houses and festivals in San Francisco, Chicago, Washington, D.C., Cincinnati, Berlin, Munich, London, Bangkok, and Jerusalem. She has also sung at the Ravinia Festival, the Bath and Dartington Festivals in England, the Jüdische Kulturtage in Berlin, and the America Haus Concert Series in Munich. Ms. Widmann-Levy made her debut with the San Francisco Symphony in February 2005 in Schumann's *Das Paradies und die Peri*, conducted by Ingo Metzmacher. She has performed with Michael Tilson Thomas and the San Francisco Symphony at Carnegie Hall, and with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and the New World Symphony. In the fall of 2005 she

embarked on a world concert tour for her CD *Como la Rosa*. Her repertoire includes the roles of Violetta in Verdi's *La traviata*, the title role in Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*, Micaëla in Bizet's *Carmen*, Mimi in Puccini's *La bohème*, Liù in Puccini's *Turandot*, Gilda in Verdi's *Rigoletto*, and Freia in Wagner's *Das Rheingold*.



Eugene Brancoveanu (various roles, including Young Boris Thomashefsky and Leon Blank, co-star of *The Green Millionaire*) recently performed in San Francisco Opera's *The Little Prince*. This season, in addition to appearing with The Philadelphia Orchestra and the New York Philharmonic in *The Thomashefskys*, Mr. Brancoveanu returns to the Santa Cruz County Orchestra as soloist in Beethoven's Symphony No. 9. His 2009–10 season included the role of Gonzalvo in Schreker's *Die Gezeichneten* with Los Angeles Opera; the title role in Mozart's *Don Giovanni* with Berkeley Opera; Yeletzky in Tchaikovsky's *Pique Dame* with the Israeli Opera; and a recital in California's San Francisco Performances concert series. With San Francisco Opera he has performed Christian in Verdi's *Un ballo in maschera*; Marullo in Verdi's *Rigoletto*; Moralès in Bizet's *Carmen*; Frank in J. Strauss II's *Die Fledermaus*; Fiorello in Rossini's *The Barber of Seville*; and the Innkeeper and the Captain in Puccini's *Manon Lescaut*. Mr. Brancoveanu has performed *The*

Thomashefskys with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Boston Symphony Orchestra at Tanglewood, San Francisco Symphony, and New World Symphony, and originated the role of Marcello in Baz Luhrmann's Broadway production of *La bohème*. Mr. Brancoveanu, who has made numerous appearances with the Romanian State Opera, is a graduate of the American Institute of Musical Studies in Graz and the Universität Mozarteum Salzburg.



Patricia Birch (Director) has earned two Emmy Awards and five Tony nominations in a career that crosses all media. Other honors include Drama Desk, Outer Critics Circle, Barrymore, Billboard, and MTV awards, as well as a Directors Guild nomination and the prestigious Fred Astaire Award for her choreography and direction of music-driven projects, with music ranging from Stephen Sondheim to the Rolling Stones. She has recently been inducted into the Theater Hall of Fame. Ms. Birch has created the musical staging for original Broadway and Off-Broadway shows including *Grease*; *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown*; *The Me Nobody Knows*; *A Little Night Music*; *Candide*; *Over Here*; *Diamond Studs*; *The Happy End*; *Pacific Overtures*; *They're Playing Our Song*; *Gilda Radner, Live from New York*; *Zoot Suit*; *Rosa*; *Parade*; *Like Jazz*; and *LoveMusik*, with Donna Murphy and Michael Cerveris, directed by Harold Prince.

Ms. Birch's directing and choreography credits include *Celebrating Gershwin* at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, and the televised concert production of *On the Town* with the London Symphony Orchestra, both with Michael Tilson Thomas; the original production of Maurice Sendak and Carole King's *Really Rosie*; and Joe Raposo's *Raggedy*. She worked with Mr. Tilson Thomas and the San Francisco Symphony on Stravinsky's *Le Rossignol* and a double bill of *Of Thee I Sing* and *Let' Em Eat Cake*. In development are *Orphan Train*, a dramatic musical; *Wo Dzai*, a multimedia martial arts adventure; and *Road to Ruin*, an exploitation musical. Opera and music projects include *Salome*, *The Mikado*, *Candide*, and *Street Scene* for New York City Opera, and *The Mass* and *The Balcony* for The Opera Company of Boston, also presented at the Bolshoi Theatre. Her film credits include choreography for all musical sequences for *Grease* and direction as well for *Grease 2*. She has also staged musical sequences for *Big*, *Working Girl*, *Sleeping with the Enemy*, *Stella*, *Awakenings*, *Billy Bathgate*, *Roseland*, *The Wild Party*, *First Wives Club*, *The Human Stain*, and *The Stepford Wives*.

Kirk Bookman (Production Supervisor and Lighting Designer) has designed lighting on Broadway for *The Sunshine Boys* (starring Jack Klugman and Tony Randall), *The Gin Game* (Julie Harris and Charles Durning), and *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*. Off-Broadway credits include *Right You Are*, *Havana Is Waiting*, *Force Continuum*, *My One Good Nerve* (Ruby Dee), *What Then*, *The Cook*, *Recent Tragic Events* (Heather Graham), *Shangai Moon*, *Mondo Drama*, *The Book of Liz* (David and Amy Sedaris), *Les Mizrahi* (Isaac Mizrahi), *Hope Is the Thing with Feathers*, *As Thousands Cheer*, *June Moon*, *The Green Heart*, *Bedbound*, *Playboy of the Western World*, *Eclipsed*,

The Importance of Being Earnest, and *Major Barbara*. His work with the San Francisco Symphony has included *The Thomashefskys*, *Of Thee I Sing*, *Oedipus Rex*, *The Nightingale*, *A Flowering Tree*, *Iolanthe*, and most recently, John Adams's *El Niño*. Currently, he is the lighting designer for Charles Busch's new Off-Broadway play *The Divine Sister*.

Peter Fitzgerald (Sound Designer) is currently designing the sound for *Priscilla Queen of the Desert*, *Ghetto Klown*, *Burn the Floor*, and *Freckleface Strawberry*. He is president of Sound Associates, Inc. and CEO of GPR Records.com, a new record company established in 2010. He was the sound designer for the Philharmonic's Stephen Sondheim *80th Birthday Celebration*, *Camelot*, and *My Fair Lady*. His other credits include Will Farrell's *Your Welcome America*, *Movin' Out*, Paul Simon's *The Capeman*, *The Will Rogers Folies*, *42nd Street*, *The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas*, *City of Angels*, and *The Life*. In addition, Mr. Fitzgerald has worked on the plays *Blithe Spirit*, *The Odd Couple*, *M. Butterfly*, and *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*.



Linda Steinberg (Media Designer) has served as executive director of The Thomashefsky Project since it was founded in July 1998, in order to rescue the story of the

Thomashefskys and early American Yiddish theater's contribution to American cultural life, to communicate this story with authenticity through the visual and performing arts, and to preserve it in an accessible mode for future generations. During the prior decade she was director of The Jewish Museum San Francisco, earning numerous awards for arts excellence for the institution and personal awards for publication and exhibition design. Other positions she has held include associate director of the Center for the Arts at the University of Judaism in Los Angeles and Director of the Brandeis-Bardin Institute in Simi Valley, California.

In addition to being on the national lecture circuit with themes on Jewish and Israeli art history, Ms. Steinberg has taught on the art faculties of the University of Judaism's Lee College for Jewish Studies, Los Angeles; California College of Arts and Crafts, Oakland, and San Francisco State University. Among the institutions for which she has served as guest curator or arts consultant are the Museum of Jewish Heritage, New York City; National Foundation for Jewish Culture, New York City; Moore College of Art, Philadelphia; Skirball Museum, Los Angeles; and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. She is a visiting scholar at Stanford University and is currently working on a book about the Thomashefskys.

In July 2010 Ms. Steinberg assumed the position of Director of Education for the new National Museum of American Jewish History on Independence Mall in Philadelphia.

Naomi Zapata (Associate Production Manager) a long time South Florida resident, has worked with organizations there such as Acme Acting Company, Florida Shakespeare Theatre, Florida Grand Opera, Coconut Grove Playhouse, and Mosaic Theatre. Her

New York associations include the Brooklyn Academy of Music, La MaMa E.T.C., and Hudson Valley Shakespeare Festival. She has been the Associate Production Manager for *The Thomashefskys* with the New World

Symphony, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, the San Francisco Symphony and the Boston Symphony Orchestra at Tanglewood. Ms. Zapata holds a B.F.A. in Stage Management from North Carolina School of the Arts.

New York Philharmonic

The **New York Philharmonic**, founded in 1842 by a group of local musicians led by American-born Ureli Corelli Hill, 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 in the world.

Music Director Alan Gilbert, The Yoko Nagae Ceschina Chair, began his tenure in September 2009, the latest in a distinguished line of 20th-century musical giants that has included Lorin Maazel (2002–09); Kurt Masur (Music Director from 1991 to the summer of 2002; named Music Director Emeritus in 2002); Zubin Mehta (1978–91); Pierre Boulez (1971–77); and Leonard Bernstein, who was appointed Music Director in 1958 and 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 Piano Concerto in F; and Copland's *Connotations*. The Philharmonic has also given the U.S. premieres of such works 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*; Stephen Hartke's Symphony No. 3; Augusta Read Thomas's *Gathering Paradise*, Emily Dickinson Settings for Soprano and Orchestra; Esa-Pekka Salonen's Piano Concerto; Magnus Lindberg's *EXPO* and *All Largo*; and Christopher Rouse's *Odna Zhizn*.

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, and has appeared in 430 cities in 63 countries on five continents. In February 2008 the Orchestra, led by then-Music Director Lorin Maazel, gave a historic performance in Pyongyang, Democratic People's Republic of Korea – the first visit there by an American orchestra. In October 2009 the Orchestra, conducted by Music Director Alan Gilbert, made its debut in Hanoi, Vietnam. The Philharmonic subsequently received the 2008 Common Ground Award for Cultural Diplomacy for its historic performance in Pyongyang, and on November 16, 2010, received the Asia Society's Cultural Ambassador Award for its concerts in Pyongyang and Hanoi. Other historic tours have included the 1930 Tour to Europe, with Toscanini; the first South American Tour, in 1951; the first Tour to the U.S.S.R., in 1959; the 1984 Asia Tour, including the first tour of India; the 1998 Asia Tour with Kurt Masur, with the first performances in mainland China; and the 75th Anniversary European Tour, in 2005, with Lorin Maazel.

A media pioneer, the Philharmonic began radio broadcasts in 1922, and is currently represented by *The New York Philharmonic This Week* – syndicated nationally 52 weeks per year, and available on nyphil.org. On television, in the 1950s and 1960s, the Philharmonic inspired a generation through Bernstein's Young People's Concerts on CBS. 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, one of the most-watched television events worldwide. In 2004 the Philharmonic became the first major American orchestra to offer downloadable concerts, recorded live. The most recent initiative is *Alan Gilbert and the New York Philharmonic: 2010–11* – downloadable concerts, recorded live, available either as a subscription or as 12 individual releases. Since 1917 the Philharmonic has made nearly 2,000 recordings, with more than 500 currently available.

On June 4, 2007, the New York Philharmonic proudly announced a new partnership with Credit Suisse, its first-ever and exclusive Global Sponsor.

The Music Director



Music Director **Alan Gilbert**, The Yoko Nagae Ceschina Chair, began his tenure at the New York Philharmonic in September 2009. The first native New Yorker to hold the post, he ushered in what *The New York Times* called “an adventurous new era” at the Philharmonic. In his inaugural season he introduced a number of new initiatives: the positions of The Marie-Josée Kravis Composer-in-Residence, held by Magnus Lindberg; The Mary and James G. Wallach Artist-in-Residence, held in 2010–11 by violinist Anne-Sophie Mutter; an annual three-week festival, which in 2010–11 is titled *Hungarian Echoes*, led by Esa-Pekka Salonen; and *CONTACT!*, the New York Philharmonic’s new-music series. In the 2010–11 season Mr. Gilbert is leading the Orchestra on two tours of European music capitals; two performances at Carnegie Hall, including the venue’s 120th Anniversary Concert; and a staged presentation of Janáček’s *The Cunning Little Vixen*. Highlights of his inaugural season included a major tour of Asia in October 2009, with debuts in Hanoi and Abu Dhabi, and performances in nine cities on the

EUROPE / WINTER 2010 tour in February 2010. Also in the 2009–10 season he conducted world, U.S., and New York premieres, as well as an acclaimed staged presentation of Ligeti’s opera, *Le Grand Macabre*.

In January 2011 Alan Gilbert was named Director of Conducting and Orchestral Studies at The Juilliard School, a position that will begin in fall 2011. This adds to his responsibilities as the first holder of Juilliard’s William Schuman Chair in Musical Studies, establishing Mr. Gilbert as the principal teacher for all conducting majors at the school. He is also conductor laureate of the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra and principal guest conductor of Hamburg’s NDR Symphony Orchestra. He has conducted other leading orchestras in the U.S. and abroad, including the Boston, Chicago, and San Francisco symphony orchestras; Los Angeles Philharmonic; Cleveland and Philadelphia Orchestras; and the Berlin Philharmonic, Munich’s Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, and Amsterdam’s Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra. From 2003 to 2006 he served as the first music director of the Santa Fe Opera.

Alan Gilbert studied at Harvard University, The Curtis Institute of Music, and The Juilliard School. From 1995 to 1997 he was the assistant conductor of The Cleveland Orchestra. In November 2008 he made his Metropolitan Opera debut conducting John Adams’s *Doctor Atomic*. His recording of Prokofiev’s *Scythian Suite* with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra was nominated for a 2008 Grammy Award, and his recording of Mahler’s Symphony No. 9 received top honors from the *Chicago Tribune* and *Gramophone* magazine. On May 15, 2010, Mr. Gilbert received an Honorary Doctor of Music degree from The Curtis Institute of Music.

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