

**Lincoln Center
Festival 2014**

**PARK AVENUE
ARMORY**



**LINCOLN CENTER FESTIVAL AND PARK AVENUE ARMORY TO CO-PRESENT
MIECZYSLAW WEINBERG'S FORGOTTEN HOLOCAUST OPERA,
THE PASSENGER, PERFORMED BY HOUSTON GRAND OPERA,
DIRECTED BY DAVID POUNTNEY AT LINCOLN CENTER FESTIVAL 2014**

November 25, 2013: Nigel Redden, director of the *Lincoln Center Festival*, and Rebecca Robertson, President and Executive Producer, Park Avenue Armory, today announced that the two organizations will co-present *The Passenger*, **Mieczysław Weinberg's** uncompromising 1968 opera about the Holocaust, performed by Houston Grand Opera and directed by **David Pountney**, in its New York premiere performances July 10, 12 and 13 at *Lincoln Center Festival 2014*. Pountney's production will have its U.S. premiere on January 18, 2014 at Houston Grand Opera.

The enormous, multi-tiered set for *The Passenger* will take full advantage of the scale of the Armory's soaring Wade Thompson Drill Hall where in 2008 *Lincoln Center Festival* presented Pountney's production of Bernd Alois Zimmermann's opera *Die Soldaten* ("an alarming spectacle," *The New Yorker*) in association with the Armory.

The Passenger was described as "a perfect masterpiece" by Dmitri Shostakovich, mentor to Polish-Jewish composer Mieczysław Weinberg who escaped Poland to live in the Soviet Union during WWII. The opera was censored by the Soviet establishment and never performed in Weinberg's lifetime. It has been championed by veteran British director David Pountney, who mounted its first full production in 2010 at the Bregenz Festival in Austria, where he is soon finishing his term as artistic director.

The leading role for the New York and Houston productions is sung by mezzo-soprano **Michelle Breedt**, who premiered the role in Bregenz. Miss Breedt will be joined by Canadian tenor **Joseph Kaiser**, best known for his starring role in Kenneth Branagh's film adaptation of *The Magic Flute*, and who last appeared at *Lincoln Center Festival* in 2002 in Bright Sheng's opera, *The Silver River*, and by soprano **Melody Moore** in the role of Marta. **Patrick Summers**, Houston Grand Opera's artistic and music director, will conduct the Houston Grand Opera Orchestra and Chorus, making their first appearance at *Lincoln Center Festival* since 1996 when it contributed its production of Virgil Thomson's and Gertrude Stein's *Four Saints in Three Acts*, libretto by Gertrude Stein, conceived, designed and directed by Robert Wilson.

As a complement to performances of *The Passenger*, the **ARC Ensemble**, eight senior faculty members from The Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto, will perform three chamber concerts featuring works by composer Mieczysław Weinberg in the newly-restored Board of Officers Room at Park Avenue Armory prior

to each performance of the opera. These prelude concerts will be free for *The Passenger* ticketholders, and will enable audiences to gain a deeper understanding of Weinberg's considerable oeuvre, which includes over 150 compositions.

Polish-born composer **Mieczysław Weinberg** (1919–96) was the only member of his immediate family to survive the Holocaust, escaping Poland in 1939 when Germany invaded. Sadly, his relocation to the Soviet Union only meant a second period of danger and discrimination under Stalin. Many of Weinberg's works were banned; others, like *The Passenger*, were deemed “cosmopolitan”—a euphemism for Jewish—and never performed. Today, however, his works are enjoying a posthumous resurgence. He is the subject of the 2010 biography, *Mieczysław Weinberg: In Search of Freedom*, by David Fanning. Weinberg's magnum opus was his first opera, *The Passenger* (1968), set to a libretto by Alexander Medvedev, and based on *Passenger from Cabin Number 45* a 1959 Polish radio play by Auschwitz survivor Zofia Posmysz, and Posmysz's subsequent novel.

Set in the late 1950s, the opera depicts a German couple, Liese and Walter, on board an ocean liner where Liese, a former SS officer, thinks she recognizes among their fellow passengers one of her erstwhile Auschwitz prisoners. Juxtaposed with scenes on board the luxury ship are flashbacks to the dark underworld where she once wielded control. Liese is never able to confirm whether the woman she sees is truly Marta, the Polish prisoner she once manipulated, and *The Passenger* makes no attempt at closure or reconciliation. Instead, the harsh and complex realities of the mass murder Liese helped perpetrate, and of her inescapable guilt, are unsparingly confronted.

Despite the Soviet suppression of Weinberg's masterwork, it had the staunch support of Shostakovich, a friend and crucial supporter of the composer. Shostakovich introduced him to music critic Alexander Medvedev, who would write the libretto for *The Passenger*. Having heard Weinberg's completed opera when it went in to rehearsal at the Bolshoi in 1968, Shostakovich wrote in 1974: “I shall never tire of the opera *The Passenger* by M. Weinberg. I have heard it three times already and have studied the score. Besides, I understood the beauty and enormity of this music better and better on each occasion. It is a perfect masterpiece.” The opera was not heard in concert until 2006 and would not be fully staged until the efforts of David Pountney bore fruit.

In addition to his position at the Bregenz Festival, English director David Pountney serves as chief executive and artistic director of Welsh National Opera. His honors include a CBE and France's Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et Lettres. Of the 2010 Bregenz Festival premiere of *The Passenger*, *The New York Times* reported: “The work was brilliantly served by David Pountney's production. Johan Engels's two-level set, with the ship above and the camp below—bleakly characterized by railroad tracks and wooden bunks—facilitated the shift in action from one to the other. Marie-Jeanne Lecca's realistic costumes, which dressed all those on board ship in white, heightened the contrast.”

Following the Bregenz Festival premiere, *The Passenger* was also seen at Teatr Weikli in Warsaw and in London, where the critical response was overwhelming. *The Telegraph* recognized that “in Mieczysław Weinberg's Holocaust opera *The Passenger*, we have one of the most unflinching engagements with this subject ever made.” *The Times* of London agreed: “It's an opera teeming with overt references, from haunting Russian folksong to blaring German marches, as well as astringent string writing reminiscent of Britten.... A compelling historical document that demanded an airing—lest we forget,” while *The Independent* pronounced it “the most significant opera composed in the Russian language since Prokofiev's *War and Peace*.”

July 10, 12 and 13, 2014

The Passenger

An opera by

Mieczysław Weinberg

Libretto by Aleksandr Medvedev

After the Novel by Zofia Posmysz

Performed in English, with translation from the original languages by David Fanning and David Pountney

Houston Grand Opera Orchestra and Chorus

Cast:

Liese: Michelle Breedt

Walter: Joseph Kaiser

Marta: Melody Moore

Tadeusz: Morgan Smith

Katya: Kelly Kaduce

Bronka: Kathryn Day

Creative team:

Conductor: Patrick Summers

Director: David Pountney

Set Designer: Johan Engels

Costume Designer: Marie-Jeanne Lecca

Lighting Designer: Fabrice Kebour

Fight Director: Leraldo Anzaldúa

Associate Director: Rob Kearley

Chorus Master: Richard Bado

Co-presented by *Lincoln Center Festival* and Park Avenue Armory

Lincoln Center Festival is sponsored by American Express

The *Lincoln Center Festival* 2014 presentation of *The Passenger* is made possible in part by generous support from the Adam Mickiewicz Institute

The Passenger is a co-production of Bregenz Festsspiele, Austria; Teatr Wielki, Warsaw; English National Opera, London; and Teatro Real, Madrid

Houston Grand Opera's performances of *The Passenger* in New York are generously supported by Bill and Sara Morgan and Amanda and Morris Gelb

To register for ticket and additional information on *The Passenger*, visit LincolnCenterFestival.org and armoryonpark.org

Opera at *Lincoln Center Festival*

The Passenger represents the latest production in an impressive list of operas by 20th and 21st century composers commissioned or presented by *Lincoln Center Festival* over the years. Beginning in 1996, with the Houston Grand Opera production of Virgil Thomson's *Four Saints in Three Acts* (New York premiere), libretto by Gertrude Stein, conceived, designed and directed by Robert Wilson, these include

- **1997:** The Royal Opera production of Hans Pfitzner's *Palestrina*, directed by Nikolaus Lenhoff, a co-presentation with The Metropolitan Opera
- **1998:** *Patience & Sara* (World premiere), music by Paula M. Kimper, libretto by Wende Persons, directed by Douglas Moser, a co-production with American Opera Projects
- **2000:** De Nederlandse Opera production of *Writing to Vermeer* (U.S. premiere), music by Louis Andriessen, libretto by Peter Greenaway, directed by Saskia Boddeke and Peter Greenway
- **2001:** *Luci mie Traditrici* (U.S. premiere), music by Salvatore Sciarrino, directed by Trisha Brown, with Orchestre Symphonique de la Monnaie; *White Raven* (U.S. premiere), music by Philip Glass, libretto by Luisa Costa Gomes, direction and design by Robert Wilson, with American Composers Orchestra
- **2002:** *The Night Banquet* (U.S. Premiere), music by Guo Wenjing, libretto by Zou Jingzhi, directed by Chen Shi-Zheng, with Ensemble Modern; *The Silver River* (N.Y. premiere), music by Bright Sheng, libretto by David Henry Hwang, directed by Ong Keng Sen
- **2003:** *Semyon Kotko* (North American premiere), music by Sergei Prokofiev, and *The Legend of the Invisible City of Kitezh*, music by Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov performed by the Kirov Opera from the Mariinsky Theatre in St. Petersburg (Valery Gergiev, Artistic and General Director); and *Macbeth*, music by Salvatore Sciarrino, directed by Achim Freyer and Friederike Rinne-Wolf, with Oper Frankfurt/Ensemble Modern
- **2004:** *Tone Test* (World Premiere) music by Nicholas Brooke, directed by David Herskovits, a co-presentation with American Opera Projects
- **2005:** *La bella dormente nel bosco* (N.Y. premiere), music by Otto Respighi, libretto by Gian Bistolfi, directed and designed by Basil Twist, featuring the Gotham Chamber Opera, Westminster Festival Choir, co-produced by Spoleto Festival USA, in association with Gotham Chamber Opera; and *Shadowtime* (U.S. Premiere), music by Brian Ferneyhough, libretto by Charles Bernstein, co-produced by Festival d'Automne à Paris and Sadlers Wells
- **2006:** *Grendel* (New York Premiere), music by Elliot Goldenthal, libretto by Julie Taymor and J.D. McClatchy, directed by Julie Taymor, co-produced and co-commissioned with the Los Angeles Philharmonic
- **2007:** *Into the Little Hill*, music by George Benjamin, libretto Martin Crimp, directed by Daniel Jeanneteau, with Ensemble Modern
- **2008:** *Die Soldaten*, music by Bernd Alois Zimmermann, directed by David Pountney, with 110-piece Bochumer Symphoniker with jazz combo, forty singers, actors/dancers
- **2010:** Wuppertal Opera production of *La porta della legge* (North American Premiere), music by Salvatore Sciarrino

- **2011:** The Royal Danish Opera production of *Selma Jezková* (U.S. Premiere), music by Poul Ruders, directed by Kasper Holten, with The Royal Danish Orchestra
- **2012:** *Émilie*, music by Kaija Saariaho, with Ensemble ACJW; *Feng Yi Ting*, music by Guo Wenjing Ensemble ACJW
- **2013:** *Matsukaze*, music by Toshio Hosokawa, co-produced with the Spoleto Festival; *The Blind* (World Premiere), music and libretto by Lera Auerbach, directed by John La Bouchardière, co-produced with American Opera Projects

Music at Park Avenue Armory

Music has a long and rich history at Park Avenue Armory, dating back to 1881 when Leopold Damrosch directed the New York Music Festival in the Armory's drill hall. The program of seven performances over five days included works by Handel, Bach, Verdi, Liszt, Schumann, Mendelssohn, Gluck, Berlioz and others. In the years following, the Armory was used as both a facility for the Seventh Regiment of the National Guard and social club, and military bands often performed.

Since its rebirth as a groundbreaking non-profit arts center in 2007, the Armory has revived this musical tradition and presented works that take advantage of its expansive and historic spaces. In July 2008, *Lincoln Center Festival*, in association with the Armory, staged Bernd Alois Zimmermann's opera *Die Soldaten* on a long runway flanked by a split orchestra and moving seating platforms; the audience literally moved through the music on railroad tracks installed on the drill hall floor. Stravinsky's *Sacred Masterpieces*, produced in association with Columbia's Miller Theatre with the Vox Chorale and the Gotham City Orchestra was presented in 2008.

In 2009, the Armory collaborated with Lincoln Center's *Great Performers* series to present the U.S. premiere of Heiner Goebbel's *Stifters Dinge*, an extraordinary sonic and visual performance landscape. Also in 2009, conductor Kurt Masur filled a long-standing wish to conduct again in the drill hall, having first played at the Armory with the New York Youth Symphony in 1987. Co-presented by Park Avenue Armory and the Manhattan School of Music, Masur led a series of master classes, culminating in a concert conducted by Masur and his protégés.

The 2008 Whitney Biennial at the Armory included both site-specific art installations and a set of 16 performances including Marina Rosenfeld's *Teenage Lontano*; Fritz Haeg's *Manhattan Animal Lessons*, in which dancers choreographed and participants followed the movements of animals; a piano/song concert by Stephen Prina using the grand staircase as a stage; and performance artist Michael Smith with one of his alter egos on display in one of the Armory's historic period rooms.

As part of its first full artistic season, the Armory presented the Tune-In Music Festival in February 2011. Curated by eighth blackbird, the contemporary festival brought together a diverse array of composers and performers and included the world premiere of the Armory's first music commission, ARCO. The Armory's 2012 season included two music presentations—the second Tune-In Music Festival, celebrating iconic composer Philip Glass, and Stockhausen's *Gruppen*, a co-production with the New York Philharmonic. For this massive work, three distinct orchestras performed, each under its own conductor, exploiting the vast acoustic environment and the soaring spatial qualities of the Armory's vast Wade Thompson Drill Hall.

The 2013 season has brought several music events to the Armory: in March, the institution presented sold-out performances of OKTOPHONIE, Karlheinz Stockhausen's epic electronic masterpiece ritualized in a lunar environment created by visual artist Rirkrit Tiravanija. The British band Massive Attack with Robert Del Naja collaborated with provocative documentary filmmaker Adam Curtis to create an imaginative experience mixing music, film, politics, and moments of illusion. And, the Armory inaugurated a new, intimate recital series in its newly rejuvenated Board of Officers Room featuring baritone Christian Gerhaher, violinist Vilde Frang, and pianist/composer Anton Batagov.

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Since its inaugural season in 1996, *Lincoln Center Festival* has received worldwide attention for presenting some of the broadest and most original performing arts programs in Lincoln Center's history. Entering its 19th year, the Festival will have presented nearly 1,322 performances of opera, music, dance, theater, and interdisciplinary forms by internationally acclaimed artists from more than 50 countries. To date, the Festival has commissioned more than 42 new works and offered some 139 world, U.S., and New York premieres. It places particular emphasis on showcasing contemporary artistic viewpoints and multidisciplinary works that challenge the boundaries of traditional performance.

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 Books, *Lincoln Center Dialogue*, *Lincoln Center Festival*, *Lincoln Center Out of Doors*, Lincoln Center Vera List Art Project, *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 the 11 resident organizations. In addition, LCPA led a \$1.2 billion campus renovation, completed in October 2012.

Lincoln Center is committed to providing and improving accessibility for people with disabilities. For information, call the Department of Programs and Services for People with Disabilities at (212) 875-5375.

Part palace, part industrial shed, **Park Avenue Armory** fills a critical void in the cultural ecology of New York City by enabling artists to create—and audiences to experience—unconventional, genre-bending work that cannot be mounted in traditional performance halls, theaters, and museum galleries. With its soaring 55,000-square-foot Wade Thompson Drill Hall and array of exuberant period rooms, the Armory offers a new platform for creativity across all art forms. The Armory has presented the final performances of the Merce Cunningham Dance Company across three separate stages as well as dance performances by Shen Wei Dance Arts, STREB, and Tricia Brown, and has mounted major installations by Ernesto Neto, Ryoji Ikeda, Christian Boltanski, Tom Sachs, and Ann Hamilton. Epic music events include Bernd Alois Zimmermann's harrowing *Die Soldaten* with Lincoln Center Festival, John Luther Adams's *Inuksuit*, Karlheinz Stockhausen's *Gruppen* with the New York Philharmonic, Stockhausen's electronic masterpiece *OKTOPHONIE* in a ritualized environment created by Rirkrit Tiravanija, and *Massive Attack V Adam Curtis*,

a multi-sensory music and film experience. Theater productions include a six-week residency in collaboration with Lincoln Center Festival and the Ohio State University of the Royal Shakespeare Company in 2011, in their Stratford-upon-Avon home rebuilt to scale in the drill hall, and the upcoming production of *Macbeth* with Kenneth Branagh in June 2014.

Since its inception in 1955, **Houston Grand Opera** has grown from a small regional organization into an internationally renowned opera company. The only American opera company invited to perform at Lincoln Center Festival for a second time, HGO enjoys a reputation for commissioning and producing new works, including fifty world premieres and six American premieres since 1973. In addition to producing and performing opera at the highest artistic level, HGO contributes to the cultural enrichment of Houston and the nation through a diverse and innovative program of performances, community events, and education projects that reaches the widest possible public. HGO has toured extensively, including trips to Europe and Asia, and it is the only opera company to have won a Tony, two Grammy awards, and two Emmy awards. HGO's performances are broadcast nationally over the WFMT Radio Network.

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