

*THE TRISTAN PROJECT*

THE ACCLAIMED PRODUCTION OF WAGNER'S OPERA  
*TRISTAN UND ISOLDE*—VISUALLY RE-IMAGINED FOR THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY—  
RECEIVES MULTIPLE PERFORMANCES ON BOTH COASTS IN SPRING 2007

VIDEO ARTIST BILL VIOLA JOINS FORCES WITH ESA-PEKKA SALONEN,  
THE LOS ANGELES PHILHARMONIC, AND PETER SELLARS

April 12-14, 18, and 24 at Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles

May 2 and 5 at Avery Fisher Hall, Lincoln Center, in New York (*NY Premiere*)

December 19, 2006  
Lincoln Center Contact:  
Matt Carlson  
212.875.5049  
mcarlson@  
lincolncenter.org

Los Angeles  
Philharmonic Contact:  
Adam Crane  
213.972.3422  
[acrane@laphil.org](mailto:acrane@laphil.org)

Photos:  
[www.lincolncenter.org/  
AboutLC/media\\_home.asp](http://www.lincolncenter.org/AboutLC/media_home.asp)

*The Tristan Project*, the internationally acclaimed multimedia arts experience designed around Wagner's opera *Tristan und Isolde*, returns in spring 2007, with multiple performances on both U.S. coasts including a reprise in Los Angeles at Walt Disney Concert Hall and the work's New York premiere at Lincoln Center's Avery Fisher Hall. Wagner's opera has been visually re-imagined for the 21<sup>st</sup> century in this production from celebrated video artist **Bill Viola**, artistic collaborator **Peter Sellars**, and Music Director **Esa-Pekka Salonen**, who conducts the **Los Angeles Philharmonic** and a cast of outstanding singers.

The vocal cast for all of these performances of *The Tristan Project* features soprano **Christine Brewer** (Isolde), tenor **Alan Woodrow** (Tristan), bass **John Relyea** (King Mark), mezzo-soprano **Anne Sofie von Otter** (debuting in the role of Brangäne), tenor **Thomas Rolf Truhitte** (Melot), and tenor **Michael Slattery** (Sailor's Voice/Shepherd).

In Los Angeles at Walt Disney Concert Hall, Salonen and the Philharmonic will perform the complete opera twice (April 18 and 24), following three one-act performances featuring each of the opera's acts paired with Debussy works influenced by *Tristan*: Act One with *Printemps* (April 12), Act Two with *Nocturnes* (April 13), and Act Three with *La Dame à la robe bleue* (April 14).

In New York, Lincoln Center's *Great Performers* series presents the New York premiere of *The Tristan Project*, with two complete performances on May 2 and 5 by Salonen and the Philharmonic in Avery Fisher Hall. (Salonen and the Philharmonic also perform two orchestral programs in Avery Fisher Hall: with pianist Jean-Yves Thibaudet on April 29 and soprano Renée Fleming on May 3.)

In *THE TRISTAN PROJECT*, Wagner's transcendent music combines with Viola's extraordinary imagery—projected onto a 30-foot screen and exploring the opera's underlying themes of love, betrayal, transformation, rebirth, memory, and time. Applying a contemporary artistic sensibility and the latest technology to Wagner's high-Romantic masterwork creates a modern-day version of the composer's concept of the *gesamtkunstwerk*, or "total artwork," a 19<sup>th</sup>-century precursor to today's multimedia art presentations.

"In a way," Salonen says in the November 2006 issue of *Playbill*, "these are such stupid things to say. But if Wagner were alive today, he would, of course, be working with video. The man was all about synthesis, and using the top technological means of his time. Very obviously he would be manipulating an image on a computer."

Viola, whose work—much like Wagner—regularly invokes the spiritual and the elemental forces of fire and water, wasn't too interested at first in the music of Wagner. "But then I went out and bought some CDs," he says in *Playbill*. "Peter Sellars turned me on to some good recordings—and once I really started to dive into it, I was deeply impressed. Wagner was describing the movement of human consciousness, when the heart turns over in that majestic and incredibly powerful human experience of love. He somehow gave a voice through sound to these ineffable movements of the human soul and psyche. That's something I've been trying to do with my camera."

The imagery of *The Tristan Project* is sometimes specific to the opera's setting—projected video of the ocean or a forest taking the place of standard opera scenery—but more often it exists as metaphor for the emotions and subconscious of the characters: from a water purification ritual between the two lovers to Tristan walking through fire and Isolde walking on water. The work climaxes in the Act Three "Liebestod" with a stunning visual representation of the ascension of the souls of the lovers—something Salonen acknowledges is usually difficult, if not impossible, to depict powerfully on the stage.

"Now we have the means," says Salonen, "to add a visual image to this that isn't banal but is incredibly moving and powerful. In a way, in the final scene of *Tristan*, Bill has done something that we all thought couldn't be done."

*The Tristan Project* premiered in a three-concert cycle by Salonen and the Los Angeles Philharmonic in December 2004 at Walt Disney Concert Hall, before having its fully staged version, directed by Peter Sellars, at the National Opera Bastille in Paris in the spring of 2005. The upcoming performances of the work will be the original semi-staged concert performances.

Considered in its time one of the most complex operas ever written, *Tristan und Isolde* is an operatic masterpiece. Wagner's earliest sketches for the opera date from December 1856. He completed the prose poem for the opera—updating the medieval tale of the fated lovers Tristan and Isolde—in 1857 and completed the composition of the music between 1857 and 1859. After moving to Paris in 1859, Wagner attempted to secure a theater for the opera's premiere, but no opera house in Paris wanted to take it on. Finally, the Dresden Opera, impressed by the work's seemingly simple requirements (very little chorus, few principals, in three acts), decided to hold the premiere. After 77 rehearsals, the work was declared not performable and was abandoned by the company. The opera finally had its premiere at the Munich Royal Court Theater in 1865 with an orchestra so large that seats in the front of the house were removed to accommodate all of the musicians required. While the first audience was scandalized by the opera's erotic nature, *Tristan* has become one of the most influential works in Western musical literature.

**ESA-PEKKA SALONEN**, the 10<sup>th</sup> conductor to head the Los Angeles Philharmonic, is now in his 15<sup>th</sup> season as Music Director. His current tenure is the second longest in the Philharmonic's history. Salonen, who was born in Helsinki in 1958, studied at the Sibelius Academy in Finland. In 1979, he made his conducting debut with the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra, and his American debut conducting the Los Angeles Philharmonic in 1984. In addition, Salonen has won acclaim for his work as a composer. Among the many highlights of Salonen's career with the Philharmonic have been world premieres of works by composers John Adams, Franco Donatoni, Anders Hillborg, William Kraft, Magnus Lindberg, Witold Lutoslawski, Bernard Rands, Roger Reynolds, Rodion Shchedrin, Steven Stucky, Tan Dun, and Augusta Read Thomas, as well as his own works. He has led critically acclaimed festivals of music by Ligeti, Schoenberg, Shostakovich, Stravinsky, Berlioz, and Beethoven, and *The Tristan Project*. He and the Philharmonic have toured extensively since 1992.

In October of 2003, Salonen and the Los Angeles Philharmonic opened Walt Disney Concert Hall, designed by Frank Gehry. Since then, the Orchestra has reached new heights. The New York Times recently wrote: "In 2006, the Los Angeles Philharmonic tops the list of America's premier orchestras and serves as a lesson in how to update an august cultural institution without cheapening its work... At the center of this grand renovation is Esa-Pekka Salonen... And if he can't be credited with every last stroke of the orchestra's good fortune (Disney Hall was on the drawing board as far back as 1988), its innovative programming and revamped sound are fully his work."

**BILL VIOLA** is widely recognized as one of the leading video artists on the international scene. For more than 30 years he has created videotapes, architectural video installations, sound environments, electronic music performances, and works for television broadcast. Viola's video installations are total environments that envelop the viewer in image and sound, employ state-of-the-art technologies, and are distinguished by their precision and direct simplicity. His single channel videotapes have been broadcast and presented cinematically around the world, and his writings have been published and anthologized for international readers. A recipient of the John T. and Catherine D. MacArthur Foundation Fellowship in 1989, and of the first Medienkunstpreis in 1993, Viola was invited to be a Scholar-in-Residence at the Getty Research Institute in Los Angeles in 1998; later that year, he created a suite of three new video pieces for the rock group Nine Inch Nails' world tour. In 2001, he completed his most ambitious project, *Going Forth By Day*, a five-part projected digital fresco cycle in high definition video, commissioned by the Deutsche Guggenheim Berlin.

**PETER SELLARS** has directed more than 100 productions, large and small, across America and abroad. A graduate of Harvard University, he studied in Japan, China, and India before becoming Artistic Director of the Boston Shakespeare Company. At 26 he was made Director of the American National Theater at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. He is a recipient of the MacArthur Foundation Fellowship and was awarded the Erasmus Prize at the Dutch Royal Palace for contributions to European culture. Sellars has collaborated with the Wooster Group, and was featured in Jean-Luc Godard's film of *King Lear*. He has also appeared on Bill Moyers' *A World of Ideas*, *Miami Vice*, and *The Equalizer*, has directed a rock video for Herbie Hancock, and has produced a series of radio episodes for the Museum of Contemporary Art's *The Territory of Art* series. His first feature film, *The Cabinet of Dr. Ramirez*, starred Joan Cusack, Peter Gallagher, Ron Vawter, and Mikhail Baryshnikov.

The **LOS ANGELES PHILHARMONIC** has defined the concept of a 21<sup>st</sup>-century orchestra with innovation and exuberance under the dynamic leadership of Esa-Pekka Salonen, music director since 1992 and a distinguished composer in his own right. Now in its 88<sup>th</sup> season, the Philharmonic is recognized as one of the world's outstanding orchestras, and is received enthusiastically by audiences and critics alike. *The New York Times* wrote, "...in 2006, [it] tops the list of America's premier orchestras and serves as a lesson in how to update an august cultural institution without cheapening its work."

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Major funding for the Opéra National de Paris production and the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts presentation of "Tristan und Isolde" has been provided by The Gregory and Regina Annenberg Weingarten Fund/American Friends of the Paris Opera & Ballet.

Made possible in part by The Fan Fox and Leslie R. Samuels Foundation, Inc.

*The Tristan Project* is made possible in part by endowment support from the American Express Company New Works Fund.

Great Performers is sponsored by the American Express Company. Additional support is provided by Bruce Kovner, Rita E. and Gustave M. Hauser, The Florence Gould Foundation, Movado, The Fan Fox and Leslie R. Samuels Foundation, Inc., The Gregory and Regina Annenberg Weingarten Fund/American Friends of the Paris Opera & Ballet, Continental Airlines, The Shubert Foundation, The Norman & Rosita Winston Foundation, Ann and Gordon Getty Foundation, E. Nakamichi Foundation, Great Performers Circle, Chairman's Council, and Friends of Lincoln Center.

Public support is provided by the New York State Council on the Arts.

Additional corporate support is provided by The Bank of New York.

Endowment support is provided by:  
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### **THE TRISTAN PROJECT**

#### ***Los Angeles Performances at Walt Disney Concert Hall:***

**Thursday, April 12, 2007 at 8 PM**

**Los Angeles Philharmonic**

Esa-Pekka Salonen, conductor

Bill Viola, visual artist

Peter Sellars, artistic collaborator

Christine Brewer, soprano (Isolde)

Alan Woodrow, tenor (Tristan)

Anne Sofie von Otter, mezzo-soprano (Brangäne)

John Relyea, bass (Marke)

TBD, baritone (Kurwenal)

Thomas Rolf Truhitte, tenor (Melot)

Michael Slattery, tenor (Sailor)

Men of the Los Angeles Master Chorale (Grant Gershon, music director)

DEBUSSY *Printemps*

WAGNER *Tristan und Isolde*, Act I

**Friday, April 13, 2007 at 8 PM**

**Los Angeles Philharmonic**

Esa-Pekka Salonen, conductor

Bill Viola, visual artist

Peter Sellars, artistic collaborator

Christine Brewer, soprano (Isolde)

Alan Woodrow, tenor (Tristan)

Anne Sofie von Otter, mezzo-soprano (Brangäne)

John Relyea, bass (Marke)

TBD, baritone (Kurwenal)

Thomas Rolf Truhitte, tenor (Melot)

Michael Slattery, tenor (Sailor/Shepherd's Voice)

Women of the Los Angeles Master Chorale (Grant Gershon, music director)

DEBUSSY *Nocturnes*

WAGNER *Tristan und Isolde*, Act II

**Saturday, April 14, 2007 at 8 PM**

**Los Angeles Philharmonic**

Esa-Pekka Salonen, conductor

Bill Viola, visual artist

Peter Sellars, artistic collaborator

Christine Brewer, soprano (Isolde)

Alan Woodrow, tenor (Tristan)

Anne Sofie von Otter, mezzo-soprano (Brangäne)

John Relyea, bass (Marke)

TBD, baritone (Kurwenal)

Thomas Rolf Truhitte, tenor (Melot)

Michael Slattery, tenor (Shepherd's Voice)

Women of the Los Angeles Master Chorale (Grant Gershon, music director)

DEBUSSY *La Damoiselle élue*

WAGNER *Tristan und Isolde*, Act III

**Wednesday, April 18, 2007 at 6 PM**

**Tuesday, April 24, 2007 at 6 PM**

**Los Angeles Philharmonic**

Esa-Pekka Salonen, conductor

Bill Viola, visual artist

Peter Sellars, artistic collaborator

Christine Brewer, soprano (Isolde)

Alan Woodrow, tenor (Tristan)

Anne Sofie von Otter, mezzo-soprano (Brangäne)

John Relyea, bass (Marke)

TBD, baritone (Kurwenal)

Thomas Rolf Truhitte, tenor (Melot)

Michael Slattery, tenor (Sailor/Shepherd's Voice)

Men of the Los Angeles Master Chorale (Grant Gershon, music director)

WAGNER *Tristan und Isolde* (complete)

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***New York Performances at Lincoln Center:***

**Wednesday, May 2, 2007 at 6 PM**

**Saturday, May 5, 2007 at 2 PM**

**Avery Fisher Hall**

**Los Angeles Philharmonic**

Esa-Pekka Salonen, conductor

Bill Viola, video artist

Peter Sellars, artistic collaborator

Christine Brewer, soprano (Isolde)

Alan Woodrow, tenor (Tristan)

Anne Sofie von Otter, mezzo-soprano (Brangäne)

John Relyea, bass (Marke)

TBD, baritone (Kurwenal)

Thomas Rolf Truhitte, tenor (Melot)

Michael Slattery, tenor (Sailor/Shepherd's Voice)

WAGNER *Tristan und Isolde* (complete)

*This production of Tristan und Isolde was co-commissioned by Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, and the Paris National Opera. The video was also co-produced by Bill Viola Studio, James Cohan Gallery, New York, and Haunch of Venison Gallery, London.*

**Related event:**

**Friday, May 4, 2007 at 7 PM**

**Stanley H. Kaplan Penthouse**

A *Tristan Project* discussion with Esa-Pekka Salonen, Bill Viola, and Kira Perov, moderated by John Schaefer

Free to Tristan Project ticket-holders

**Additional Los Angeles Philharmonic performances at Avery Fisher Hall:**

**Sunday, April 29, 2007 at 3 PM**

**Los Angeles Philharmonic**

Esa-Pekka Salonen, conductor

Jean-Yves Thibaudet, piano

SALONEN *Helix* (New York premiere)

RAVEL *Piano Concerto for the Left Hand*

PROKOFIEV *Suite from Romeo and Juliet*

**Thursday, May 3, 2007 at 8 PM**

**Los Angeles Philharmonic**

Esa-Pekka Salonen, conductor

Renée Fleming, soprano

STRAUSS *Sextet*, from *Capriccio*, Op. 85

STRAUSS *Wie umgibst du mich mit Frieden*, from *Die Liebe der Danae*, Op. 83

STRAUSS *Mein elemer*, from *Arabella*, Op. 79

KORNGOLD *Ich geh zu ihm?*, from *Das Wunder der Heliane*, Op. 20

KORNGOLD *Briefszene (Ich soll ihn niemals)*, from *Die Kathrin*, Op. 28

SIBELIUS *Lemminkäinen Suite*, Op. 22

**Ticket Information:**

Walt Disney Concert Hall: Tickets are on sale now at the Walt Disney Concert Hall box office, online at [www.LAPhil.com](http://www.LAPhil.com), or via credit card phone order at 323-850-2000. Groups of 12 or more may be eligible for special discounts for selected concerts and seating areas. For all information, please call 323-850-2000.

Avery Fisher Hall: Tickets are available at the Alice Tully and Avery Fisher Hall box offices, Broadway at 65<sup>th</sup> Street, by calling CenterCharge at 212-721-6500, or by visiting Lincoln Center's website at [www.lincolncenter.org](http://www.lincolncenter.org).

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