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CONTACT: Brianna Taylor / 215-568-2525  
btaylor@devinepartners.com

**THE MANN PRESENTS NORTH AMERICAN PREMIERE OF *FIREBIRD: REIMAGINED*  
WITH THE PHILADELPHIA ORCHESTRA**

***Featuring The Philadelphia Orchestra, Ladysmith Black Mambazo  
and Janni Younge of Handspring Puppet Company***

PHILADELPHIA (Mar. 8, 2016) – On July 20, in celebration of its 40<sup>th</sup> season, the Mann Center for the Performing Arts will present the North American premiere of *Firebird: Reimagined*, a multidisciplinary interpretation of Igor Stravinsky’s orchestral score for the 1910 ballet *The Firebird*. The culminating performance of the Mann’s innovative, five-month, community-based festival, *Firebird: Spirit Rising*, the performance will feature The Philadelphia Orchestra, conducted by Cristian Măcelaru, multi-Grammy-winning, South African vocal ensemble Ladysmith Black Mambazo, and larger-than-life puppets inspired by the artistry of the Broadway sensation *War Horse* and created by Janni Younge of South Africa’s renowned Handspring Puppet Company. *Firebird: Reimagined* has been supported by The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage.

“This rich, cultural program further elevates the original programming the Mann has been contributing to the cultural landscape of Philadelphia,” said Catherine Cahill, President and CEO of the Mann. “The opportunity to experience the North American premiere of this inventive new touring performance, coupled with new commissioned works unique to the Mann stage, is a truly exciting moment for music lovers. This type of reimagination of a classic performed by the distinguished Philadelphia Orchestra, and in concert with the incredible artistry of Ladysmith Black Mambazo and Handspring Puppet Company, will make for a triumphant night at the Mann.”

Nolan Williams, Jr., CEO of NEWorks Productions and Festival Artistic Director for the Mann, will curate the first half of the *Firebird: Reimagined* concert to include performances of the two traditional Russian folk songs which inspired Stravinsky: *The Larch Tree* and *The Vain Suitor*. Williams—a noted composer, producer and musician whose diverse body of work has been performed in distinguished venues across the country—has arranged these Russian folk songs especially for Ladysmith Black Mambazo, stylizing them with South African harmonies and rhythms.

The evening will be anchored in the second half by The Philadelphia Orchestra performing Igor Stravinsky’s full orchestral 1910 ballet score for *The Firebird*. Creating a distinctly contemporary African sensibility for this Russian symphonic work, the score will be accompanied by a re-imagination of the original *Ballets Russes* staging with Younge’s towering puppets, performed by expert puppeteers and dancers. This new touring performance, which makes its North American debut at the Mann, will continue on to Wolftrap, Ravina, Sun Valley, the Hollywood Bowl and Saratoga throughout the summer.

*Firebird: Reimagined* will serve as the centerpiece of the Mann’s annual Party in the Park gala which will celebrate the Mann’s 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary on July 20.

## **Firebird: Spirit Rising Festival: The Mann's third consecutive community festival**

For the third consecutive season, the Mann will curate a unique, five-month festival which takes the Mann beyond the wall of the performance venue and into the community. The *Firebird: Spirit Rising* festival, running from April through August, explores the power of partnership to bring unique, artistic programming to the community. Community events include:

### **April 1 – July 31: Stravinsky and Multiculturalism**

*Free Library of Philadelphia Parkway Central Library*  
(Free Admission)

The Edwin A. Fleisher Collection of Orchestral Music at the Free Library of Philadelphia curates a display that utilizes Igor Stravinsky's *Firebird* as a case study and a catalyst for an examination of multiculturalism in the arts. Patrons will explore the archetypal mythological roots of the firebird in world cultures, discover how art movements like Primitivism and musical movements like Jazz are demonstrative of cross-cultural interchange and synthesis, and, finally, observe the firebird's continued presence in popular culture.

*In partnership with the Free Library of Philadelphia*

### **May 16-August 14: Firebird at the Rosenbach**

*Rosenbach Museum & Library*  
(Free After Museum Admission)

When Stravinsky was commissioned by Diaghilev to write *The Firebird* in 1909, he was an unknown twenty-seven-year-old living in St. Petersburg. By the 1940s he was one of the world's best-known composers and was living in Los Angeles, where his circle of friends included the author and socialite Mercedes de Acosta. The Rosenbach will feature Acosta's translation of Stravinsky's article "The Diaghilev I Knew," a handwritten excerpt of "The Rite of Spring," and a tracing of Stravinsky's foot. In addition to her friendship with Stravinsky, Acosta had also been romantically involved with Tamara Karsavina, the legendary ballerina who originated the role of the Firebird, and the display will include a pair of Karsavina's slippers gifted to Acosta.

*In partnership with the Free Library of Philadelphia*

### **May 23-24: Firebird at the Zoo**

*The Philadelphia Zoo*  
(Free After Zoo Admission)

The Mann Center will bring programming to several thousand Philadelphia school students over two days at the Philadelphia Zoo, for a day of art, music, scavenger hunts and guided tours of the McNeil Avian Bird Center. Animals from Russia and South Africa will also be featured and showcased to students throughout the day.

*In partnership with the Philadelphia Zoo*

### **Sunday, June 5: Firebird: Spirit Rising Family Day (2-4 p.m.)**

*Northeast Regional Library*  
(Free Admission)

Hosted by the Northeast Regional Library, this afternoon of programming at the Northeast Regional Library will feature live music, storytelling, food demos, and arts and crafts that will align with the rich Russian themes of *Firebird* throughout the second largest library in Philadelphia.

*In partnership with the Free Library of Philadelphia*

### **Tuesday, June 14: Sarafina! in Partnership with Howard University**

*The Mann Center for the Performing Arts*  
(Free Admission)

The Mann will present the musical *Sarafina!* as the kick off to the Mann's 2016 Young People's Concert Series. *Sarafina!* is a musical inspired by the 1976 Soweto Student Uprising, when more than 10,000 South African

youth boldly defended their right to an education that affirms their cultural identity and heritage. Now, 40 years later, the inspiring story of these brave South Africans students comes to life in this stellar production by Howard University's Department of Theater Arts.

*In partnership with NEWorks Productions, Howard University Department of Theatre Arts, and The Friends of Theatre and Dance at Howard University*

**Tuesday, June 21: *Firebird: Fusion* (2-5 p.m.)**

*Walnut Street West Library*

*(Free Admission)*

Hosted by the Walnut Street West Library, students from the KIPP DuBois Collegiate Academy will present new music inspired by Stravinsky's *Firebird* Suite along with Russian and South African folk songs—a real musical fusion. Directed by Michael Schaller.

*In partnership with the Free Library of Philadelphia and KIPP DuBois Collegiate Academy*

**Wednesday, July 20: *Firebird: Reimagined Concert & Party in the Park Gala* (8 p.m.)**

*The Mann Center for the Performing Arts*

*(Tickets: \$15-55)*

The Mann Center for the Performing Arts will present the North American premiere of the multidisciplinary interpretation of Igor Stravinsky's orchestral score for the 1910 ballet. *Firebird: Reimagined* will link South African and Russian traditions and integrate music, literature, and the disciplines of dance, movement, and puppetry. This performance will feature The Philadelphia Orchestra, conducted by Cristian Măcelaru, Grammy award-winning, South African vocal ensemble Ladysmith Black Mambazo, and larger-than-life puppets inspired by the artistry of the Broadway sensation *War Horse* and created by Janni Younge of South Africa's renowned Handspring Puppet Company. The Philadelphia Orchestra's performance of the complete score for *The Firebird* will be accompanied by a new interpretation of the original *Ballets Russes* staging with Younge's puppets, performed by expert puppeteers and dancers. *Firebird: Reimagined* will serve as the centerpiece of the Mann's annual Party in the Park gala. For more information about gala packages, visit the Mann website at <http://www.manncenter.org/content/firebird-2016-party-park>.

In addition to these community events, the Mann has partnered with Moore College of Art and Design, KIPP DuBois Collegiate Academy, Global Leadership Academy and other local schools to bring unique educational opportunities and master classes related to the cross-cultural explorations of *Firebird* to students in the Philadelphia area. To learn more, visit <http://manncenter.org/firebird-spirit-rising>.

**About the Mann**

As one of the most important outdoor music centers in the country, the Mann presents premiere artists in a world-class, entertainment destination in association with AEG Live. Each summer season, renowned symphony orchestras, iconic rock stars and the latest touring artists in indie rock, hip hop, R&B and pop take the stage here, and today's success is a nod to the venue's storied history. The Mann has been the summer home of The Philadelphia Orchestra since the 1930s and presented critically acclaimed performers in every decade since then. Located in the heart of Philadelphia's Fairmount Park, the Mann hosts more than 170,000 visitors annually. Signature concert experiences are surrounded by Philadelphia's stunning skyline and include seats beneath the Mann's acoustically acclaimed pavilion; picnics, blankets and music under the stars on its famous lawn; and dining in Crescendo, the venue's spectacular tented restaurant. For more information, visit [www.manncenter.org](http://www.manncenter.org).

**About The Philadelphia Orchestra**

The Philadelphia Orchestra is one of the preeminent orchestras in the world, renowned for its distinctive sound, desired for its keen ability to capture the hearts and imaginations of audiences, and admired for a legacy of innovation in music-making. The Orchestra is inspiring the future and transforming its rich tradition of achievement, sustaining the highest level of artistic quality, but also challenging—and exceeding—that level, by creating powerful musical experiences for audiences at home and around the world. Yannick Nézet-Séguin continues his inspired leadership as the eighth music director of The Philadelphia Orchestra, which began in the fall of 2012. His highly collaborative style, deeply-rooted musical curiosity, and

boundless enthusiasm, paired with a fresh approach to orchestral programming, have been heralded by critics and audiences alike. Musician-led initiatives shine a spotlight on the Orchestra's musicians, as they spread out from the stage into the community, and the Orchestra's numerous education and community partnership initiatives are an important focus of the organization's offerings. For more information on The Philadelphia Orchestra, please visit [www.philorch.org](http://www.philorch.org).

#### **About NEWorks Productions**

As one of the country's premiere producers of inspirational-arts programming, NEWorks Productions partners with leading humanitarian, educational, arts, and renowned institutions to present curatorial festivals, concert productions, special events, and other signature projects, that leverage the power of music and the arts for community engagement and social good. Past and present partners include: the Mann Center for the Performing Arts, the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Washington National Opera, the American Cancer Society, the Susan G. Komen Foundation, Georgetown University, Oberlin College, the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Memorial Project Foundation, the Embassy of India, the Embassy of the Republic of South Africa, the Amalfi Coast Music and Arts Festival, the National Symphony Orchestra, and the world class Philadelphia Orchestra.

#### **About The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage**

The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage is a multidisciplinary grantmaker and hub for knowledge sharing, funded by The Pew Charitable Trusts, and dedicated to fostering a vibrant cultural community in Greater Philadelphia. The Center fulfills this mission by investing in ambitious, imaginative projects that showcase the region's cultural vitality and enhance public life, and by engaging in an exchange of ideas concerning artistic and interpretive practice with a broad network of cultural practitioners and leaders.



*Firebird: Reimagined* has been supported by The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage.

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