

## People &amp; Places

## Music

## First public performance

## NY Philharmonic back on stage after 13 mths

NEW YORK, April 15, (AP) — Esa-Pekka Salonen walked on stage to join the New York Philharmonic, which had not gathered before an audience for exactly 400 days.

"On behalf of all us on stage, welcome back," the conductor told the crowd Wednesday night. "We have been dreaming of this moment for a long time."

The philharmonic gave its first public performance after a historic hiatus of more than 13 months caused by the coronavirus pandemic, playing at the Shed in Brookfield Place, about 2 miles from its under-renovation Geffen Hall at Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts.

"I'm kind of on a euphoric high right now, because I missed it more than I realized," concertmaster Frank Huang said afterwards.

There was a reduced force of 23 strings - all masked - and no brass or woodwinds for a program that lasted one hour: Caroline Shaw's "Entr'acte," Jean Sibelius' "Rakastava (The Lover)" and Richard Strauss' "Metamorphosen."

The cavernous Shed, which opened in April 2019, had a masked audience of 150 spaced out in groups of one and two folding chairs, about 10 feet between each set, in a venue that usually seats about 1,200.

There were electronic tickets with timed entry, and temperatures were taken upon entry. Each person had to show proof of a negative COVID-19 test or proof of having completed vaccination at least 14 days earlier.

During the gap, many musicians taught. They had the benefit of continued but reduced salaries, a contrast to their Lincoln Center neighbor the Metropolitan Opera, which stopped pay for its unionized employees for long periods.

The last time the Philharmonic had gathered before an audience was on March 10 last year for a night of Claude Debussy compositions with mezzo-soprano Isabel Leonard and conductor Louis Langree.

## Performances

Since then, at most a handful of Philharmonic musicians had played together in public, at "Bandwagon" performances moved around the New York City area and as a quartet in Florida where there were less stringent COVID-19 regulations. There were also programs for digital release on NYPhil+ recorded at St. Bart's Church and at Lincoln Center's Alice Tully Hall with music director Jaap van Zweden.

The Philharmonic hopes to resume regular subscription concerts in September, shifted to Tully and the Rose Theater at Lincoln Center Jazz until the Geffen reopens in September 2022. Its musicians will open the summer series of Picnic Performances in New York City's Bryant Park with four nights starting June 9 and also hope to play in Vail, Colorado. The limited return is ahead of Broadway shows, which have talked about possibly resuming in September, and the Met, which will open Sept. 27 if it can reach new labor agreements.

Salonen, the 62-year-old music director of the San Francisco Symphony and principal conductor of London's Philharmonia Orchestra, came in as a guest conductor and will repeat the program on Thursday night.

"If there's one thing we musicians have loved during these 14 months or so, it is that nothing - absolutely nothing - can replace the act and the ritual of a live concert," he told the audience. "Music, of course, exists on many different levels: in written form using the complex system of symbols we call notation; as recordings on various mediums; or perhaps most importantly, in our memory and in our dreams. However, music can truly fulfill its original I dare say biological function as a powerful tool to convey deepest emotions and feelings only when performed here and now at this union point in time where music performers and the audience become one in a perfect symbiosis."

Acoustics are difficult for an orchestra in The Shed, with its high ceiling creating the need for amplification. Players grinned as they saw the crowd, and some in the audience responded with a standing ovation.

"The three works we have chosen to play tonight all share a sense of moaning, nostalgia and loss elevated to something deeply and essentially human by sheer beauty," Salonen said. "Of course, no single program can even begin to sum up our feelings and emotions after these months. Instead, we should see tonight's concert as a new beginning, a signal for happier times ahead, filled with music and other things that give meaning to our existence in this troubled world."

## Also:

**MILAN:** Riccardo Muti and Plácido Domingo will headline the 2021 Verona Arena Opera Festival, essentially last year's season revived as a sign of "great optimism and utmost seriousness," the festival's general director has said.

After an abbreviated 2020 season of concerts due to the pandemic, operas will be fully staged with a complete cast and chorus. But the Arena's elaborate sets, including a full pyramid for "Aida," will be substituted with technology, including projectors and holograms, to reduce the number of people backstage and maintain distancing requirements.

Seating will be limited to 3,200 at the start of the season, but organizers said they hoped the vaccine campaign will advance in a way to allow more seating as the season progresses. In a normal year, a sold-out show seats 13,550.

"We have more experience, and we know better our enemy," general director Cecilia Gasdia told a news conference. "We have strict protocols that can evolve. We have virus tests, and above all we have the vaccine."

Muti will open the season on June 19 and 22, conducting a concert version of "Aida" to mark the 150th anniversary of the Verdi title whose pageantry has made it a festival mainstay.

The summer festival will then pick up with the 2020 calendar of operas that never were staged, starting the cast as announced last year: "Cavalleria rusticana" by Pietro Mascagni together with "Pagliacci" by Ruggero Leoncavallo, "Aida," "Nabucco" and "La Traviata" by Verdi and Puccini's "Turandot."

Domingo will headline one of five gala events, which include also Verdi's "Requiem," Beethoven's Symphony No. 9, an opera gala featuring German tenor Jonas Kaufmann and a ballet gala starring Roberto Bolle.



Essa-Pekka Salonen, music director of the San Francisco Symphony and principal conductor of London's Philharmonia Orchestra, leads members of the New York Philharmonic as a guest conductor before an audience of 150 concertgoers at The Shed in Hudson Yards, April 14, in New York. It was the first time since March 10, 2020, that the entire orchestra performed together in front of a live audience. (AP)

## Film

## An audacious and provocative film

## On 'Promising,' a harrowing ending

By Jocelyn Noveck

"Man. That ending!" That's likely what you'd hear everyone saying on the way out of the multiplex — if we were all still going to the multiplex — after "Promising Young Woman." In an audacious and provocative film (nominated for five Oscars), there's no part more audacious and provocative than the final act, in which former medical student Cassie (Carey Mulligan) exacts her very unique form of revenge.

But though some call the film a black comedy, there's nothing funny about the end — it's brutal, and feels very real. Writer-director Emerald Fennell says she wasn't interested in a comic-book fantasy ending. Nobody pulls out an AK-47 and blows the bad guys away. In fact, the bad guys tend to masquerade as good guys.

Fennell, nominated for both director and original screenplay in what is, stunningly, her feature debut, says her first draft of the ending was "a lot starker and a lot bleaker" than the one we see now. (That might shock some who think it's already pretty darned bleak.)

Things were tense on set the days they shot a particularly difficult scene, with a stunt team doing the blocking but Mulligan, a best actress nominee for her fierce and nimble performance, performing it herself. It was grueling even before the realism went too far and Mulligan was briefly in actual physical danger. After the close call, she says, she went outside and suddenly, uncharacteristically burst out weeping.

Fennell and Mulligan sat down recently over Zoom to discuss their film, the gratifying recognition they've gotten, and that harrowing ending (no specific spoilers here, but if you haven't already seen the film, beware nonetheless.) They also expressed hope the movie could help raise awareness among young people about sexual consent. (In fact, Focus Features and RAINN, the anti-sexual violence group, announced this week they were partnering with Campus Circle to host free virtual screenings of "Promising Young Woman" for college students.)

AP: Emerald, this is your debut fea-

ture. Did you ever imagine getting such recognition?

Fennell: I think you'd have to be a megalomaniacal monster to ever think you'd be nominated for Academy Awards. No ... the thing that was so important to us was just physically getting it finished because we had such a short shoot time (23 days). And I was enormously pregnant. So this has just been extraordinary.

AP: Carey, a decade ago you were nominated for an Oscar for "An Education." How have things changed for you since?

Mulligan: It changed my career when it happened. But ... the experience was quite overwhelming, and I found it stressful and felt like an imposter. This time around, I'm determined to really have a nice time because it's just incredible.

AP: So, about that ending: Emerald, did you have different versions in mind when you started?

Fennell: In theory, there were lots of versions of the ending that could have happened. The first thing I handed in was a lot starker, I would say, and a lot bleaker. There was certainly never an ending that was written down that would have been her cutting everyone's (privates) off and ... walking away with a cigarette in slow motion. The ending that we WANT, is not possible. That's the whole point of the film, really.

AP: Carey, what was it like on set during the toughest part?

Mulligan: We watched a stunt team do it first ... we all stood around wincing. And we did have a mishap where it went wrong, briefly. I thought, "Well, I can probably get out of this." Then I realized that I was not able to. We had a sort of special symbol or something. I did a thumbs-down or whatever ... and then I went outside and just completely lost it and just couldn't stop crying.

Fennell: We had to be extra, extra diligent and cautious, because if something did go wrong, we wouldn't know until it really was too late. So it was one of those things that on the face of it, maybe didn't seem like an incredibly dangerous stunt. But it was.

AP: Emerald, could this film have been done with an actress that was not Carey? Carey, could this have been done without Emerald as writer and director?

Mulligan: Categorically not. I don't think anyone else could have written it and I don't think anyone else could have directed it. When I read the script, I had kind of butterflies in my stomach thinking "Oh, this is incredible writing and incredible storytelling." But there's a risk involved because you're talking about something that touches so many people's lives. And then I met Emerald. And I swear, within five minutes, I just never felt nervous again. And I said yes, within five minutes of our meeting as well.

AP: So, you didn't play hard to get!

Mulligan: No, not at all. I'd be an idiot! To even allow a beat, to let anyone else get a look at it. I had to jump on it.

Fennell: I think that's important. It's exactly Carey's natural response to things that make her such a good, brilliant actress, she doesn't overthink things, she's not conscious, she's not aware of the audience or the camera when she's acting. She's not playing to anyone. She's just being the person.

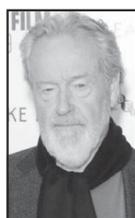
AP: I heard one college student suggest that this movie should be screened for fraternities like his. Do you think this movie might help move the needle when it comes to young people understanding sexual consent?

Fennell: You hope so ... if it makes it a bit easier to have this conversation between boys, between men, between men and women, then that's wonderful. That's sort of all a film can do, make you have a conversation afterwards.

Mulligan: Even if it's not something that you can right now, in this moment, voice, you'd have to have your head buried really far in the sand to not watch this and have some sort of moment of reflection, men AND women. We've talked to people who've said they've had their whole families, watched it with their early 20s kids. And they've all sat around the dinner table and talked about it and that's brilliant. But even if it's just someone watching it on their own, and planting a seed, you know, that would be great, too. (AP)



Carey Mulligan poses for a portrait to promote the film 'Promising Young Woman' during the Sundance Film Festival in Park City, Utah on Jan. 25. The film is nominated for an Oscar for best picture and Mulligan is nominated for best actress. (AP)



Scott



Olivo

## Variety

**MILAN:** The great-grandchildren of Guccio Gucci, who founded the luxury fashion house that bears his name nearly a century ago in Florence, are appealing to filmmaker Ridley Scott to respect their family's legacy in a new film that focuses on a sensational murder.

"The House of Gucci," starring Lady Gaga and Adam Driver, is based on a book about the 1995 murder-for-hire of one of Guccio's grandchildren, Maurizio, and the subsequent trial and conviction of his ex-wife, Patrizia Reggiani, portrayed by Lady Gaga, served 16 years in prison for contracting the murder.

One of Maurizio's second cousins, Patrizia Gucci, is worried that the film goes beyond the headline-grabbing true-crime story and pries into the private lives of the Guccio Gucci heirs.

"We are truly disappointed. I speak on behalf of the family," Gucci told The Associated Press on Wednesday. "They are stealing the identity of a family to make a profit, to increase the income of the Hollywood system....Our family has an identity, privacy. We can talk about everything, but there is a borderline that cannot be crossed." (AP)

**NEW YORK:** Tony Award-winner Karen Olivo says she won't return to "Moulin Rouge! The Musical" once it reopens, saying she's frustrated by the Broadway industry and especially the silence in the wake of revelations about the behavior of producer Scott Rudin.

"Moulin Rouge! The Musical" is not produced by Rudin but Olivo in an Instagram video posted Wednesday said she was not coming back to the hit show to make a stand about social justice.

"Social justice is actually more important than being the sparkling diamond," Olivo said. "Building a better industry for my students is more important than me putting money in my pockets."

The move comes a week after The Hollywood Reporter's cover story on Rudin contained accounts of the Broadway and Hollywood heavyweight throwing glass bowls, staples and baked potatoes at former employees. (AP)

**NEW YORK:** Fiction authors Steven Dunn and Tope Falarin and dramatists Jordan E. Cooper and Sylvia Khoury are among this year's winners of the

Whiting Awards, honors with a cash prize of \$50,000 that are presented to each of 10 emerging writers. Previous winners of the award, estab-



Lady Gaga, wearing a wedding dress in background left, plays Maurizio Gucci's former wife Patrizia Reggiani during the shooting of a movie by Ridley Scott, based on the story of the murder of Maurizio Gucci in 1995, in Rome, April 8. (AP)

lished in 1985 and managed by the Whiting Foundation, include Colson Whitehead, Michael R. Jackson and former US poet laureate Tracy K. Smith, who gave a keynote address during Wednesday night's virtual ceremony.

Other new recipients of the Whiting include dramatist Donnetta Lavinia Grays, nonfiction writers Joshua Bennett and Sarah Stewart Johnson and the poets Marwa Helal, Ladan Osman and Xandria Phillips. (AP)

**BERLIN:** Germany's biggest-selling daily newspaper, Bild, plans to launch a television channel that will go on air before the country's election in late September, its publisher said Monday.

Publisher Axel Springer said that the core of the new Bild channel's schedule will be up to six hours daily of live programming starting in the morning.

It said in a statement that "the focus is on politics, sports, celebrities, crime, and service topics, among others," and the program could be interrupted at any time for breaking news stories.

Springer already owns Welt, one of Germany's two main all-news TV channels, which was formerly named N24 and renamed in 2018 to bear the name of the company's daily broadsheet newspaper. Bild is more tabloid in nature. (AP)