Mark Morris Directs and Choreographs
*Orfeo ed Euridice* in Met Debut

Countertenor David Daniels stars in the new production conducted by Met Music Director James Levine; costume designer Isaac Mizrahi makes Met debut

First Met production by a choreographer in 50 years;
First staging at the Met in 35 years

New York, NY (March 12, 2007)—On Wednesday, May 2, Mark Morris makes his Met debut directing the company’s new production of Gluck’s *Orfeo ed Euridice*, marking the first time a choreographer has directed at the Met in 50 years. A creative force in the world of opera and dance, Morris is joined by a team of designers and previous collaborators, including famed fashion designer Isaac Mizrahi, who makes his Met debut designing the costumes; set designer Allen Moyer makes his Met debut. James F. Ingalls returns to the Met stage as lighting designer. Met Music Director James Levine conducts the four-performance run through May 12, 2007. The performances are dedicated to the memory of mezzo-soprano Lorraine Hunt Lieberson.

David Daniels, who made his role debut as the grief-stricken Orfeo last season in Chicago, becomes the first countertenor to sing the role at the Met. Orfeo’s wife Euridice, lost to the underworld, will be sung by Latvian soprano Maija Kovalëvska, (replacing Lisa Milne, who had previously been scheduled to sing the role). Heidi Grant Murphy, whose roles for the company have ranged from Sophie in *Der Rosenkavalier* to Nannetta in *Falstaff*, sings Amor, the goddess of love who reunites the couple.
Not since 1953, when George Balanchine directed *The Rake’s Progress*, has a choreographer directed a Met production. For Morris’s interpretation of the original 1762 version, a chorus of 100 singers and a small corps of dancers, including members of Mark Morris Dance Group, will join the principals on stage. The production is pared down to one single-unit set and no intermission in order to showcase the dramatic force of the music and dance.

The premiere of *Orfeo ed Euridice* this season marks the first time the opera has been presented by the Met in 35 years. Gluck’s opera in three acts was first performed in Italian in Vienna in 1762 for the Emperor Francis I, with the famous castrato Gaetano Guadagni singing Orfeo. (The composer’s 1774 revision, prepared for the Paris Opera, gave the male title role to a tenor and added several pieces to make the work, now sung in French, grander.) The Italian *Orfeo ed Euridice* was the first of Gluck’s reform operas, in which he tried to bring a new kind of simplicity to both story and music, replacing the complicated intrigue and vocal extravagance of Baroque *opera seria*.

**About the creative team**

Mark Morris founded Mark Morris Dance Group (MMDG) in 1980 and has since created more than 120 works for the company. From 1988-1991, he was Director of Dance at the Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie in Brussels, the national opera house of Belgium. Among the works created during his tenure were three evening-length dances: *The Hard Nut; L’Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato;* and *Dido and Aeneas*. In 1990, he founded the White Oak Dance Project with Mikhail Baryshnikov. Morris has created six works for the San Francisco Ballet since 1994 and received commissions from American Ballet Theatre and the Boston Ballet, among others. His work is also in the repertory of the Geneva Ballet, New Zealand Ballet, Houston Ballet, English National Ballet, and The Royal Ballet. He has worked extensively in opera, directing and choreographing productions for the New York City Opera, English National Opera, and the Royal Opera, Covent Garden. In 1996, Morris choreographed a fully-staged version of *Orfeo ed Euridice* that toured the country with the Handel and Haydn Society, conducted by Christopher Hogwood.
Set designer Allen Moyer’s Broadway credits include *Twelve Angry Men*, *Reckless*, *The Man Who Had All the Luck*, and *A Thousand Clowns*. His designs for opera include *Nixon in China* (Opera Theatre of St. Louis), *Agrippina*, for which he also designed the costumes, and *Così fan tutte* (Santa Fe Opera), *The Mother of Us All* (San Francisco Opera), and *Il Trittico* and *La Bohème* for New York City Opera. He designed the set of Mark Morris’s ballet, *Sylvia*, for the San Francisco Ballet.


At the Met, James F. Ingalls has designed lighting for *An American Tragedy*, *Salome*, *Benvenuto Cellini*, *The Gambler*, *War and Peace*, and *Wozzeck*. He most recently designed Mark Morris’s *King Arthur* at English National Opera. Other work for Morris includes *Sylvia*, *Sandpaper Ballet*, *Maelstrom*, and *Pacific* (San Francisco Ballet); *Platée* (Royal Opera House, Covent Garden and New York City Opera); *L’Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato*, *Dido and Aeneas*, and *The Hard Nut* (Mark Morris Dance Group); *Ein Herz* (Paris Opera Ballet); and the White Oak Project’s debut tour. Recent projects at Lincoln Center include *Zaide* and *Ainadamar*, both directed by Peter Sellars. For Merce Cunningham Dance Company, Ingalls designed *Fluid Canvas* and *Split Sides* with music by Sigur Ros and Radiohead.

**About the cast**

Among the leading countertenors of his generation, David Daniels made his Met debut in 2000 as Sesto in Handel’s *Giulio Cesare*, then scored another success as Oberon in Britten’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. In 2004, Mr. Daniels created a sensation for his portrayal of the exiled hero, Bertarido, in the Met’s new production of Handel’s *Rodelinda*, opposite Renée Fleming in the title role. Just prior to his appearances as Orfeo, he returns to the Met in *Giulio Cesare*, this time singing the title role for the first time with the company.

A shining young star in the opera world, Ms. Kovalevska made her Met debut on December 9, 2006 as Mimì in *La Bohème*. A winner of the 2006 Operalia World Opera
Competition, career highlights include Donna Elvira in *Don Giovanni* in Verona and Reggio Emilia, and the Countess in *Le Nozze di Figaro* and Liù in *Turandot* with the Latvian National Opera. Upcoming engagements include Mimi with Los Angeles Opera, Liù in Valencia, the Countess in Tokyo, and Tatiana in *Eugene Onegin* at the Glyndebourne Festival.

The Met repertoire of the extraordinarily versatile soprano Heidi Grant Murphy ranges from Mozart, Donizetti, Wagner, Verdi and Mussorgsky, to Richard Strauss and Francis Poulenc. She made her first appearance with the company in *Die Frau ohne Schatten* in 1989 and her most recent one as Nannetta in *Falstaff* in 2005. Ms. Murphy is a graduate of the Met’s Lindemann Young Artist Development Program, and in addition to her many opera performances with the company, she has also been a soloist in concerts with both The MET Orchestra and The Met Chamber Ensemble.

**About Maestro Levine**

Met Music Director James Levine, who will be conducting *Orfeo ed Euridice* for the first time at the Met, has conducted more performances than any maestro in the company’s 124-year history (over 2,000). In the 35 years since his Met debut, he has developed a relationship with the company that is unparalleled in its history and unique in the music world today. As Music Director, a title he first acquired in 1976, he has presided over a period of growth and refinement in the musical quality of Met performances that has garnered universal recognition. Since 2003, he has also served as Music Director of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. This season his repertory includes the new productions of *Madama Butterfly*, *Il Trittico*, and *Orfeo ed Euridice*, and revivals of *Don Carlo*, *Idomeneo*, *Die Meistersinger*, and *Die Zauberflöte* (as well as the abridged, English-language version of *The Magic Flute*).

**About the Met**

Under the leadership of new General Manager Peter Gelb, the Met has launched a series of bold initiatives designed to broaden its audience and revitalize the company’s repertory. The Met has made a commitment to presenting modern masterpieces alongside the classic repertory, with highly theatrical productions featuring the greatest
opera stars in the world. Earlier this year, the company announced a groundbreaking commissioning program in partnership with New York’s Lincoln Center Theater, to provide renowned composers and playwrights with the resources to create and develop new works at the Met and at Lincoln Center’s Vivian Beaumont Theater.

Building on its 76-year-old international radio broadcast history, the Met recently began to use advanced media distribution platforms and state-of-the-art technology to attract new audiences and reach millions of opera fans around the world. Last September, Metropolitan Opera Radio on Sirius launched as a 24-hour satellite radio channel broadcasting both live and rare historical performances. The Met also presents free live streaming of performances on its website once every week with support from RealNetworks®.

In December, the company launched “Metropolitan Opera: Live in HD,” a series of six live performance transmissions, shown in high definition in movie theaters throughout North America, Europe, and Japan. The series has met with overwhelming success and plays to sold-out houses, prompting many theaters to schedule encore showings. By the end of the series, the Met estimates over 500,000 tickets sold. These performances are subsequently being broadcast on PBS, as part of a new “Great Performances at the Met” series.

The Met’s other audience development initiatives include a first-ever open house, which offered the public free access to attend the final dress rehearsal of Madama Butterfly; an extensive transit advertising campaign in New York City; reduced ticket prices, including an immensely popular new rush ticket program; a free open house for public school students to attend the new, English-language version of The Magic Flute in January; and the opening of the Arnold and Marie Schwartz Gallery Met, which exhibits contemporary art inspired by operas in the Met’s repertory.

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