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Free for All at Town Hall returns with Goode & TASHI

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“FREE FOR ALL AT TOWN HALL” – THE HEADLINING FREE CONCERT SERIES – WILL GRACE NEW YORK’S HISTORIC TIMES SQUARE VENUE FOR THE SIXTH STRAIGHT YEAR WITH FREE PERFORMANCES BY PIANIST RICHARD GOODE ON APRIL 27 AND LEGENDARY QUARTET TASHI ON MAY 4

TASHI REUNITES FOR FIRST NEW YORK CONCERT IN 30 YEARS, PERFORMING OLIVIER MESSIAEN’S TRANSCENDENTAL *QUARTET FOR THE END OF TIME*, THE WORK FOR WHICH THE ENSEMBLE WAS FOUNDED, AND TO CELEBRATE THE CENTENARIES OF MESSIAEN AND ALEXANDER SCHNEIDER – THE MUSICAL STATESMAN WHO PRESENTED TASHI IN ITS 1973 DEBUT CONCERT

**“Free for All at Town Hall offers chamber music for the perfect price: \$0.”
– *Newsday***

“One of the most welcome new series in New York.” – *New York Times*

Five years ago, Twin Lions, Inc. – the production company founded and operated by classical music veterans Jacqueline Taylor and Omus Hirshbein – announced the first “Free for All at Town Hall” concerts. The series has produced all that its name promised: absolutely free concerts by first-rate musicians, performed in one of New York’s most historic venues – Times Square’s un-square Town Hall. The successful series returns for its sixth season on April 27 with a recital by revered New York-based pianist Richard Goode.

On May 4, “Free for All at Town Hall” presents a spectacular reunion: the first New York performance in 30 years by TASHI – the quartet of soloists who made their New York debut in 1973 in the Greenwich Village series at The New School, founded by the great musical guru Alexander (“Sasha”) Schneider. Pianist Peter Serkin, violinist Ida Kavafian, clarinetist Richard Stoltzman, and cellist Fred Sherry will play a program that includes the work they convened as TASHI to perform: Olivier Messiaen’s 1940 masterpiece, *Quartet for the End of Time*. TASHI’s concert celebrates both Schneider’s and Messiaen’s centennials, and celebrates the fact that Schneider – esteemed violinist, conductor, and devoted promoter of young talent – maintained the ticket price

of his legendary downtown concert series at a rock-bottom \$1.00 for 13 consecutive seasons, inspiring Twin Lions many years later.

Alexander (“Sasha”) Schneider was also one of the most influential elders at Vermont’s legendary Marlboro Music School and Festival every summer for decades. Richard Goode, like the members of TASHI, was a youthful participant there, and is now one of Marlboro’s co-artistic directors. Mr. Goode, who gave a recital in New York’s Rose Theater in January, has not yet announced his Free for All at Town Hall program, but the *New York Times* review of his January concert raises hopes that he’ll include some Debussy and Chopin with some of his signature Bach and Beethoven, as he did then:

That Mr. Goode was able to underscore formal lucidity without stinting on poetry was no small feat. Five sinfonias by Bach and four mazurkas by Chopin sang and danced in equal measure; Mr. Goode gave each its own character. His account of [a] well-worn Beethoven work was all the more powerful for the clarity and restraint he brought to the first two movements. By contrast, the finale seemed breathless.

TASHI was the first classical ensemble to play in a nightclub when the group performed the Messiaen *Quartet* at New York’s famed Bottom Line. The quartet enjoyed five hugely successful years, during which its members applied their solo talents to programs mixing new music and old, and introduced the concept of informal concert dress to the classical community. Pianist Peter Serkin, by then eager to pursue new solo repertoire, left the ensemble; and the group – with two new members – continued as a string quartet and clarinet combination. The original TASHI members reconvened for a reunion concert in Portland, Oregon, last January. The quartet is scheduled to play in April, at Ithaca College (NY), in Princeton, and at Harvard University; and this summer will perform at the Ravinia and Tanglewood Festivals. Mark Swed, of the *Los Angeles Times*, reported on the Portland reunion:

TASHI reunion conquers “Time” – The quartet has lost none of its magic as it performs Messiaen’s work for the first time in 30 years.... Serkin gave every piano attack extraordinary sharpness... The sound of [Stoltzman’s] clarinet seemed to be drifting in from another galaxy. Kavafian...sounded utterly alive to the sweetness of Messiaen’s sonorities. Sherry...was brilliantly rhapsodic.

But if the performance was of our time, it also went beyond time. And if the members’ stylistic differences are more exaggerated than ever now that each has forged a distinguished solo career, that made the TASHI magic all the more meaningful.

The *New Yorker’s* music critic, Alex Ross, eloquently prefaced a 2004 review of a different performance of Messiaen’s *Quartet for the End of Time*:

The most ethereally beautiful music of the 20th century was first heard on a brutally cold January night in 1941, at the Stalag VIIIa prisoner-of-war camp, in Görlitz, Germany. The composer was Olivier Messiaen, the work *Quartet for the End of Time*.... Sitting in the front row – and shivering along with the prisoners – were the German officers of the camp. The title does not exaggerate the

ambitions of the piece. An inscription in the score supplies a catastrophic image from the Book of Revelation: “In homage to the Angel of the Apocalypse, who lifts his hand toward heaven, saying, ‘There shall be time no longer.’” It is, however, the gentlest apocalypse imaginable[...][with] fiercely elegant dances, whose rhythms swing along in intricate patterns without ever obeying a regular beat. In the midst of these Second Coming jam sessions are episodes of transfixing serenity – in particular, two “Louanges,” or songs of praise. Each has a drawn-out string melody over pulsing piano chords; each builds toward a luminous climax and then vanishes into silence. The first is marked “infinitely slow”; the second, “tender, ecstatic.” Beyond that, words fail.

Historically speaking, “Free for All at Town Hall” is a direct descendant of the debut concerts in which Alexander Schneider presented numerous young musicians – a very reasonably-priced downtown series still devoted to presenting emerging artists and ensembles for enthusiastic capacity audiences, now commemoratively titled “The Schneider Concerts at The New School.” Among the young musicians he presented were the twelve year-old Peter Serkin, the Guarneri, Cleveland, Johannes, and Vermeer String Quartets, and TASHI. Yefim Bronfman and Yo-Yo Ma made their Carnegie Hall debuts under Schneider’s direction, as soloists with the New York String Orchestra, the acclaimed professional training project for young musicians that Schneider led for 24 years, until his death. Schneider, born in 1908 in Vilna, Russia – now Vilnius, the capital of Lithuania – was a member of the legendary Budapest Quartet, and emigrated to the United States in 1938. The *New Grove Dictionary* describes him as “one of the most unquenchably energetic figures in the public musical life of the U.S.A.”

Schneider was a frequent guest conductor with many orchestras, including the New York and Los Angeles Philharmonics and the St. Louis and San Francisco Symphonies, besides leading his own Brandenburg Ensemble. He was directly involved in organizing the Casals Festival, both in Prades, Spain and in Puerto Rico, as well as the Israel Festival. He founded the Alberneri Trio and the Schneider Quartet (the first ensemble to record all Haydn’s string quartets), was Vice President of the Fromm Foundation, and served on the faculties of numerous leading institutions.

Since its first concert in 2003 – with violinist Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg and pianist Anne-Marie McDermott – “Free for All at Town Hall” has presented Alison Balsom, Manuel Barrueco and Al di Meola, Joshua Bell, Ethel, Vladimir Feltsman, David Finckel and Wu Han, Evelyn Glennie, Konstantin Lifschitz, Susanne Mentzer and Sharon Isbin, Edgar Meyer, the Miró Quartet, Anne-Sofie von Otter, André-Michel Schub, Peter Serkin, David Shifrin, Opus One Piano Quartet, Arabella Steinbacher, Dawn Upshaw, André Watts, and Peter Wiley.

TASHI’s New York reunion performance of Messiaen’s *Quartet* will be preceded by three other works. Charles Wuorinen has “recomposed” two works by Renaissance masters especially for TASHI: Josquin des Prez’s *Ave Maria...Virgo Serena*, and Thomas Morley’s *Christes Crosse*, which will open the program and be followed by Toru Takemitsu’s *Quatrain II*. The Messiaen masterpiece will comprise the second half of the concert.

A charter sponsor of “Free for All at Town Hall” – 96.3 FM WQXR – will be providing information and updates on this year’s concerts. *AM/New York* is Media Partner.

Tickets for “Free for All at Town Hall” are available ONLY at the Town Hall Box Office, starting at noon on concert days, Sunday, April 27, and Sunday, May 4, 2008. Both performances begin at 5 pm. Free tickets may be picked up at the box office between noon and show time, with a maximum of two tickets per person, on a “first come, first served” basis. Updates and more information are available by phone at 212-937-7979, or online at www.freeforallattownhall.org. Photographs are available on request from 21C Media Group, Inc.

Richard Goode: “Free for All at Town Hall”

Sunday, April 27, 2008 at 5:00 pm

Recital program to be announced

TASHI: “Free for All at Town Hall”

Sunday, May 4, 2008 at 5:00 pm

Josquin des Prez (c.1440-1521)

Ave Maria...Virgo Serena

recomposed for TASHI in 2007 by Charles Wuorinen (b.1938)

Thomas Morley (c.1557-1603)

Christes Crosse

recomposed for TASHI in 2007 by Charles Wuorinen (b.1938)

Toru Takemitsu (1930-1996)

Quatrain II

Olivier Messiaen (1908-1992)

Quartet for the End of Time