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**FOLKSBIENE HONORS MICHAEL TILSON THOMAS AT NEW YORK
PHILHARMONIC PRESENTATION OF "THE THOMASHEFSKYS: MUSIC AND
MEMORIES OF A LIFE IN THE YIDDISH THEATRE"**

AVERY FISHER HALL IS SETTING FOR FOLKSBIENE GALA ON APRIL 6

BENEFIT ALSO HONORS DAVID AND SYLVIA STEINER

(January 21, 2011) The National Yiddish Theatre – Folksbiene hosts a tribute to the conductor and performer Michael Tilson Thomas on Wednesday April 6, when he returns to Lincoln Center for an exclusive two-concert engagement of "The Thomashefskys: Music and Memories of a Life in the Yiddish Theatre," at Avery Fisher Hall. A new edition of Tilson Thomas's acclaimed multi-media concert-performance performs on consecutive nights, Tuesday April 5 and Wednesday April 6, both at 7:30pm. The April 6th concert provides the setting for the venerable Folksbiene's annual gala, with a private reception with Tilson Thomas and his co-honorees David and Sylvia Steiner prior to the concert.

Folksbiene, the sole surviving professional Yiddish theatre in America, provides a valuable living link to the rich legacy of the Yiddish theatre, which flourished on Second Avenue and was dominated by Tilson Thomas's legendary grandparents, Boris and Bessie Thomashefsky. At the same time, the Drama Desk Award-winning company has distinguished itself in recent years for producing critically acclaimed and widely accessible new works in Yiddish that are adding to this legacy.

Under the artistic leadership of Zalmen Mlotek, Folksbiene's artistic director, who served as a consultant on "The Thomashefskys," Folksbiene has asserted that the great legacy of the Yiddish theatre in its heyday, vividly explored in Tilson Thomas's concert, continues to exert a unique and profound influence on American popular culture.

"The Thomashefskys" Music and Memories of a Life in the Yiddish Theatre" was developed by The Thomashefsky Project. When it premiered at Carnegie Hall in 2005, The New York Times called "The Thomashefskys" "a well-researched documentary presented as theater." The Financial Times said, "Fiddler-shmiddler. This one really raises the roof."

Featuring the distinguished performer-singers Judy Blazer, Shuler Hensley, Eugene Brancoveanu, and Ronit Widmann-Levy, and directed by Patricia Birch, the show impressively combines media projections, theatrical staging and stunning orchestral arrangements of some of the seminal theatre music of the period. Commenting on the potential impact of the concert, Mlotek, the internationally recognized authority on

Yiddish folk and theatre music, said, "With Maestro Tilson Thomas deftly serving as host, narrator and conducting the NY Philharmonic, this is undoubtedly one of the most remarkable events of both the concert and theatre seasons in New York."

The L.A. Times called "The Thomashefskys" "an evening of pure pleasure!"

Folksbiene honors David and Sylvia Steiner for their tireless support of the Yiddish theatre. Mr. Steiner, the chairman of Steiner Equities Group, is the visionary founder of Steiner Studios in Brooklyn. He is a commissioner of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey. Mrs. Steiner is a member of the AJC's Board of Governors as well as the Major Gifts Cabinet for UJA of MetroWest. The Steiners are major supporters of the arts and of Jewish culture, among other varied interests.

Now in its historic 96th consecutive year, the Folksbiene Yiddish Theatre, the longest continuously producing Yiddish theatre company in the world, dramatically expanded its programming in recent seasons. It presents plays, concerts and literary events in English and Yiddish, with English and Russian supertitles accompanying all performances. The company's two-fold mission is to preserve the legacy of the Yiddish theatre -- dating back to the late 19th century in Europe -- and to add to this legacy by developing new work. Through its numerous accommodations for non-Yiddish speakers, its outreach to underserved audiences in and outside of New York, and its cultivation of new work and young actors, the company has significantly broadened and diversified its audience.

Individual tickets to the gala concert on Wednesday April 6 (reception at 5:30pm, concert at 7:30pm), which is chaired by Audrey Mlotek, and co-chaired by Judy & Stuart Rosen, and Charlie Rose & Beatrice Schreter, are \$75 to \$500 per person. To purchase tickets or for information, call 212/213-2120, ext. 203, or visit www.folksbiene.org

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