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For Immediate Release  
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## **BASIL TWIST’S GROUND-BREAKING AND CRITICALLY ACCLAIMED *SYMPHONIE FANTASTIQUE* ANNOUNCES FINAL EXTENSION**

**20th Anniversary Production with Live Piano By Christopher O’Riley and Backstage Tours Will Close on September 2 Following 6 Previews and 153 Regular Performances**

### *Symphonie Fantastique*

Created by **Basil Twist**

Featuring pianist **Christopher O’Riley**

Puppeteers: **Kate Brehm, Ben Elling, Andy Gaukel, Jonothon Lyons, and Rachael Shane**

Lighting Design by **Andrew Hill**

Performances through September 2: **Tuesday–Saturday at 8:30pm; Saturday and Sunday at 4pm**

**HERE** (145 Sixth Avenue, Manhattan)

\$35 and up; [here.org](http://here.org); 212-352-3101

55 minutes with no intermission

Ages 8 and above

In response to overwhelming demand and near universal critical acclaim, *Symphonie Fantastique* – the singular creation by designer, director, master puppeteer, and MacArthur “genius” **Basil Twist** – will extend one final time to **September 2**. At the time of its closing, the 20th anniversary engagement will have played 6 previews and 153 regular performances.

Set to Hector Berlioz’s revolutionary 1830 score, *Symphonie Fantastique*, for the first time in New York, features live piano accompaniment by **Christopher O’Riley**. Hailed as a creative masterpiece when it debuted in 1998, the production, which opened on April 4, is a presentation from HERE’s Dream Music Puppetry Program and a centerpiece of HERE’s 25th anniversary season.

Twenty years ago, theatergoers and critics swooned at the production’s hallucinatory power. Today, the accolades and bursts of euphoric joy continue at an even greater pace. In his recent *New York Times* Critic’s pick review, Ben Brantley, who called the original production “true magic,” wrote, “I found myself slipping into a fugue of irrational, unadulterated joy,” and urged that “anyone seeking pure, thought-exorcising escapism — the kind provided by acid trips and dreams of flying — need only plunge into the churning waves of ‘Symphonie Fantastique.’” *The New Yorker* declared that *Symphonie Fantastique* is “not to be missed,” and staff writer Joan Acocella warned audiences to, “wear your galoshes. And reserve early. When the show premiered, the *Wall Street Journal* said it was New York’s hottest ticket outside ‘The Lion King.’ This year’s incarnation may be hotter still.”

In fact, Terry Teachout, in the aforementioned *Wall Street Journal* review, remarked that the production “is lit so cunningly and colorfully that you soon become disoriented and surrender joyously to the illusions being created before your amazed eyes.” Elizabeth Zimmer in *The Village Voice* declared, “If you have never seen *Symphonie*, find a way to go. And consider yourself lucky to be sharing your walk on this planet with Twist and his fluent crew.”

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*Symphonie Fantastique* takes place in the most unlikely of places – a 1,000-gallon water tank, in which five unseen puppeteers swirl countless pieces of fabrics, feathers, fishing lures, flashlights, glitter, dyes, plastic, vinyl and bubbles in all shapes and sizes, creating a dream-like world of imagination and surreal storytelling.

Previously performed to a recording of Berlioz's intense, ravishing symphonic masterpiece, the 20th anniversary production marks the first time in New York City that *Symphonie Fantastique* will be performed to live piano accompaniment, using the Franz Liszt piano transcription. Berlioz wrote *Symphonie Fantastique* likely in part while under the influence of opium, and reportedly due to an unrequited love, creating bold, bright and moody flourishes of music through five short movements. At the piano is **Christopher O'Riley**, who has been a soloist with the New York Philharmonic, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Chicago Symphony and San Francisco Symphony, along with a recitalist throughout the U.S., Europe and Australia. O'Riley is also widely known as the host of NPR's "From the Top," now in its 15th year.

"Although I have been a puppeteer as long as I can remember, the premiere of *Symphonie Fantastique* in 1998 really started what has been a career filled with blessings," commented Twist. "Since then, I've worked on Broadway, in opera and ballet and Lincoln Center, and all over the world, but I remain in my essence a proud artist of New York City's downtown. I'm thrilled to bring this piece back to its true home. The world has changed, I have changed, and even this piece has changed, but we all still want and need to gather together in the dark and be swept away by enchantment."

"Over the years, HERE's beloved Dream Music Puppetry Program, which was inaugurated by Basil Twist's *Symphonie Fantastique*, has filled our theater with local, national, and international works that surprise and bedazzle our audiences. After making his debut 20 years ago, it means so much to have Basil make HERE the home to his unique and magical puppetry vision," said Kim Whitener, HERE's Producing Director.

Casting for the 20th-anniversary production features some of the puppetry world's finest artists, *Symphonie Fantastique* veteran and frequent Twist collaborator, **Andy Gaukel**, along with *Symphonie Fantastique* newcomers **Kate Brehm**, **Ben Elling**, **Jonothon Lyons** and **Rachael Shane**. Following each performance, the puppeteers will welcome audience members backstage for a walk-through to see the tank, and some of the materials used for the production. Lighting design is by **Andrew Hill**.

Originally scheduled for 12 weeks only, performances of *Symphonie Fantastique* will now take place until **September 2** at HERE, located at 145 Sixth Avenue, just below Spring Street. The performance schedule is Tuesday through Saturday at 8:30pm with 4pm matinees on Saturday and Sunday. Tickets, starting at \$35, can be purchased by visiting [here.org](http://here.org) or by calling 212-352-3101. In person sales at the box office after 5pm only on performance days and two hours prior to curtain for matinees. For Group Sales, contact [tickets@here.org](mailto:tickets@here.org).

## About the Artists

A native of San Francisco, **Basil Twist** is a third generation puppeteer who lives and works in New York City, and is the sole American graduate of the Ecole Supérieure Nationale des Arts de la Marionnette in France. Since coming to New York over 20 years ago, Twist has garnered an international reputation as an audacious designer, director, and performer. He creates iconic, visionary puppetry worlds with a remarkable range of style and scope appearing in intimate nightclubs to large orchestra halls. He is a sought after collaborator for theater, dance, opera, and film. Original creations include *Symphonie Fantastique*, *La Bella Dormiente Nel Bosco*, *Dogugaeshi*, *Hansel and Gretel*, *Behind The Lid*, *Arias with a Twist*, *Seafoam Sleepwalk*, *Rite of Spring*, and *Sisters Follies*.

Collaborations include *Behind The Lid* with Lee Nagrin and *Red Beads* with Lee Breuer/Mabou Mines. His recent collaborations include *Yoshimi Battles the Pink Robots* with Des McAnuff (director), and *A Street Car Named Desire* for The Comedy Francaise in Paris with Lee Breuer. His Broadway credits include *Charlie and The Chocolate Factory*, *The Pee Wee Herman Show*, *Oh Hello!*, and *The Addams Family*. Film credits

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include *Harry Potter and The Prisoner of Azkaban*. In dance most recently, he created the sets and puppetry for the world premiere of *Dorothy and The Prince of Oz* for The Tulsa Ballet and Ballet Met. With Christopher Wheeldon he collaborated on a new *Nutcracker* for the Joffrey Ballet, *Cinderella* at the Dutch National and San Francisco Ballets, and *A Winter's Tale* for the Royal Ballet. He created *Darkness and Light* with Pilobolus, and created the title role in *Wonderboy* with The Joe Goode Dance Company.

In drama, Twist created the unforgettable siblings in Paula Vogel's play *The Long Christmas Ride Home* at Trinity Repertory and The Vineyard Theatre (including directing and designing the West Coast Premiere at The Magic Theatre) and the play within the play for Oskar Eustis' *Hamlet* at Shakespeare in the Park.

His utterly unique approaches have been recognized with awards, critical acclaim, and have furthered contemporary artistry and the technical craft of puppetry. Twist is a MacArthur Fellow, and lives in New York where he leads HERE's Dream Music Puppetry Program.

Acclaimed for his engaging and deeply committed performances, the pianist **Christopher O'Riley** is known to millions as the host of NPR's *From the Top*. Now in his 15th year on the air, O'Riley introduces the next generation of classical-music stars to almost a million listeners each week. He performs around the world and has garnered widespread praise for his untiring efforts to reach new audiences.

Christopher O'Riley has performed as a soloist with virtually all of the major American orchestras, including the New York Philharmonic, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Philadelphia Orchestra, Chicago Symphony, National Symphony, and San Francisco Symphony. In addition, O'Riley has performed recitals throughout North America, Europe, and Australia.

Living by the Duke Ellington adage "There are only two kinds of music, good music and bad," O'Riley – a proponent of the former in all of its guises – has received the prestigious Avery Fisher Career Grant and an equally coveted four-star review from Rolling Stone magazine. O'Riley strives to introduce new audiences to classical music with an almost missionary zeal by performing piano arrangements of music by Radiohead, Elliott Smith, Pink Floyd, and Nirvana alongside traditional classical repertoire. He has collaborated for many years with the flutist Sir James Galway and cellists Matt Haimovitz and Carter Brey.

**Kate Brehm** has worked as a Twist associate since 2005 on productions such as *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, *Dorothy and the Prince of Oz*, *The Rite of Spring*, *Dogugaeshi*, *Petrushka*, and *Sister's Follies*. She devises and directs visual movement theater as *innotlost*. Brehm lectures on affective performing scenery and cinematic techniques for live puppetry, and is certified in the Margolis Method of physical theater. She's also enjoyed working as movement director, designer, performer, or technician with Torry Bend, Mabou Mines, Christopher Williams, Julie Atlas Muz, and the Blue Man Group.

**Ben Elling** is a performer and theatrical technician. He has puppeteered with Tandem Otter on *Sister's Follies*, and Basil Twist's *Rite of Spring*. Elling is pleased to be back at HERE, where he served as Technical Director. He currently freelances about town, collaborating with artists and venues to bring their work to stage.

As a puppeteer, some of **Andy Gaukel**'s credits include the world premiere of Paula Vogel's *The Long Christmas Ride Home* and Basil Twist's *Symphonie Fantastique*. In 2013, he held a Creation Residency at the Institut International de la Marionnette in Charleville-Mézières, France. A graduate of Trinity Rep Conservatory (MFA) in Providence, Gaukel's original work *Schweinehund* premiered at the 2015 Festival Mondial des Théâtres de Marionnettes in Charleville-Mézières, France and has since been presented at the 2016 Internationales Figurentheaterfestival Blickwechsel in Germany, among others around Europe. In March 2017, *Schweinehund* had its North American premiere at Casteliers in Montreal and in May 2017 was presented as part of the BIAM (Biennale internationale des arts de la marionnette) in Paris. He is the proud recipient of two Jim Henson Foundation grants to help further his original work.

**Jonathon Lyons** is a New York based actor, writer, and puppeteer. *Symphonie Fantastique* marks his fifth

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production with Basil Twist after *Sisters Follie's*, *Rite of Spring*, *Petrushka*, and *Dogugaeshi*. Other performance credits include Blue Man Group, *Sleep No More*, *Off the Main Road* (Williamstown Theater Festival), starring Kyra Sedgwick, Anthony Minghella's *Madama Butterfly* (The Met), and Moisés Kaufman's *El Gato con Botas* (New Victory Theater). Written works include *The Tenement* (2010 NY Innovative Theater Award for Outstanding Original Short Script), and *Ensø* (2013 Jim Henson Foundation Seed Grant). His most recent work, *The Apple Boys*, an original barbershop quartet musical with music and lyrics by Ben Bonnema, was seen in a limited presentation at Ars Nova last fall and is on track for a full production in New York later this year. [jonothonlyons.com](http://jonothonlyons.com) @theappleboys

**Rachael Shane** has performed in Julie Atlas Muz and Matt Fraser's *Jack and the Beanstalk* at Abrons Art Center, as well as with Chris Green (*Firebird* in 2013, 2015), Basil Twist (*Rite of Spring* in 2013, *Sister's Follies* in 2015), and Lake Simons (*Carnival of the Animals* in 2015-17, *The Jewel Casket* in 2014), and multiple projects with Puppet Kitchen. Shane was part of the interactive theatrical production Pips Island in 2016-17. Shane runs an artists residency program called The Freight Project. She has a BFA in Drama from UNC School of the Arts.

**Patrick Newton** (Swing Puppeteer) is thrilled to be a part of *Symphonie Fantastique*! As a Brooklyn-based performer, Patrick has been fortunate to be involved in a wide range of projects including TV, theatre, music, fashion, and beyond. Credits: (Theatre) Blue Man Group, APT Theatre, No Hope Productions. (TV) Late Night with Seth Meyers, Halt and Catch Fire, Latin Billboard Awards. Patrick would like to give huge thanks to Basil for being brought on to this incredible show!

**Abdiel Vázquez** (Substitute Pianist) has performed as soloist with all the major orchestras in Mexico and in stages in Europe, Asia, North America, and South America. He is a principal guest conductor for Manhattan Opera Studio, where he first led a production of *The Magic Flute* in 2017 and returns in 2018 for a production of *Hansel and Gretel*. Winner of the First Prize at The World Competition and of New York's Shining Stars Debut Series, Vázquez made his Carnegie Hall debut in 2013 performing the New York premiere of Manuel Ponce's Piano Concerto. Vázquez is the president of the World Piano Teachers Association chapter Mexico, founder and director of the music school Little Chopins in New York, and vocal coaching faculty at Manhattan School of Music, where he obtained a Master's Degree in 2008.

## About HERE

**HERE's Dream Music Puppetry Program**, under the artistic direction of **Basil Twist**, with producing direction from HERE co-founder **Barbara Busackino**, is one of few programs in the country to grow and commission contemporary adult puppet works, particularly works that feature live music as a collaborative element. Dream Music seeks to secure the future of puppetry by providing increased development and performance opportunities to puppet artists, and by collaborating with artists from other disciplines to develop new puppetry techniques. In addition, Dream Music brings to New York the most excellent of international puppetry, reflecting on Twist's roots at the École Supérieure Nationale des Arts de la Marionnette in Charleville-Mezieres, France. Dream Music was inaugurated with the premiere of Basil Twist's OBIE-award winning *Symphonie Fantastique* in 1998 and the opening of the Dorothy B. Williams Theatre, an intimate space created specifically for intimate puppetry. HERE's Dream Music is also proud to house the Griff Williams Puppetry Collection. The 6 antique marionettes of Harry James, Griff Williams, Cab Calloway, Arturo Toscanini, Ted Lewis and Paul Whiteman were all performed with The Griff Williams Orchestra in the 1930s & 40s throughout America's big band era. They have a permanent home outside the Dorothy B. Williams Theatre at HERE.

The OBIE-winning **HERE (Kristin Marting, Founding Artistic Director and Kim Whitener, Executive Director)**, which celebrates its 25th Anniversary this season, was named a Top Ten Off-Off Broadway Theatre by *Time Out New York*, is a leader in the field of producing and presenting new, hybrid performance viewed as a seamless integration of artistic disciplines— theater, dance, music and opera, puppetry, media, visual and installation, spoken word and performance art.

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Standout productions include Eve Ensler's *The Vagina Monologues*, Basil Twist's *Symphonie Fantastique* and *Arias with a Twist*, Trey Lyford & Geoff Sobelle's *all wear bowlers*, Young Jean Lee's *Songs of the Dragons Flying to Heaven*, James Scruggs *Disposable Men*, Corey Dargel's *Removable Parts*, Taylor Mac's *The Lily's Revenge*, Kamala Sankaram's *Miranda* and Robin Frohardt's *The Pigeoning*, among many others. In 2008, following an extensive renovation, HERE re-opened the doors to its long-time downtown home for the arts, where it continues as a vibrant, welcoming haven for artists and audiences alike.

**Media Contact: John Wyszniwski at Everyman Agency, [john@everymanagency.com](mailto:john@everymanagency.com), 347-416-3881.**

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