

LIVE FROM LINCOLN CENTER
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Lincoln Center Festival/New York Philharmonic
Kurt Masur's 75th Birthday & Farewell

"Thank you, Kurt Masur" has been the season-long motto of the New York Philharmonic. Indeed, there is much for which to thank Mr. Masur. His 11 seasons as the Orchestra's Music Director have seen a dramatic improvement in the Philharmonic's performance standards as well as a discipline in its playing that have laid to rest the one-time canard that the players of the New York Philharmonic are an unruly bunch. Concert after concert during the Masur years the Philharmonic has shown that it can stand comparison with the greatest orchestras anywhere in the world. The 2001-2002 season has been Mr. Masur's final one as Music Director, though he will return for a number of weeks next season as a Guest Conductor.

To put the seal on the Masur tenure, as well as to celebrate the Maestro's 75th birthday, a special concert by the New York Philharmonic has been scheduled in Avery Fisher Hall for Thursday evening, July 18. Characteristically, Mr. Masur has devised a program that beams a spotlight on a number of the orchestra's principal players. Happily, we'll be in Avery Fisher Hall that evening with our cameras and microphones to bring that concert to you live in our continuing Live From Lincoln Center series.

The concert will begin with a demonstration of the corporate excellence of the players—the Overture to *Candide* by Leonard Bernstein (himself a former Music Director of the Philharmonic), performed by the orchestra without conductor! I remember a similar conductorless *Candide* Overture performance as a memorial to Bernstein in Carnegie Hall with musicians from several of the orchestras with whom he had particularly close associations, among them the Philharmonic, of course, as well as the Boston Symphony, the London Symphony, the Concertgebouw Orchestra of Amsterdam, and the Vienna Philharmonic.

Then Mr. Masur will conduct an unusual work by an American composer whose output he has championed during his entire tenure with the Philharmonic: Joseph Turrin. It is a Fandango for Trumpet, Trombone and Band. The soloists will be the principal players of their respective sections: Philip Smith, trumpet, and Joseph Alessi, trombone. Mr. Smith joined the trumpet section of the Orchestra in 1978, becoming principal a few years later. Mr. Alessi became the Philharmonic's principal trombone player in 1984, coming to New York from the Philadelphia Orchestra.

Kurt Masur has conducted much opera in Europe, but as far as I can recall opera has not figured in his American musical life. We'll get two hints of Masur the opera conductor at the July 18 concert: the Third Act Introductions to both

Weber's *Der Freischütz* and Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*.

If the Turrin pairing of solo trumpet and trombone is unusual, we'll have an even more unusual solo duet as the next offering: the Allegro from Karl Ditters von Dittersdorf's *Sinfonia concertante* for Viola, Double Bass and Orchestra.

Dittersdorf was one of the most active musicians in 18th century Europe, with a particular flair for writing for the double bass. Soloists in the performance will again be principal players of their respective sections: Cynthia Phelps, viola, and Eugene Levinson, double bass. Miss Phelps, named principal violist of the New York Philharmonic in 1992, is one of four of the evening's soloists who were appointed to their positions by Mr. Masur. Mr. Levinson has been the Philharmonic's principal double bass player since 1984, having previously served in that position with the Minnesota Orchestra-and before that with the Leningrad (now St. Petersburg) Philharmonic.

Next will come a more familiar pairing of solo instruments-the two violins of Bach's Concerto in D minor. The slow movement of that seraphic work will be played by the Orchestra's principal associate concertmaster, Sheryl Staples, who was named to that position in 1998, and Michelle Kim, named assistant concertmaster in 2001. Mr. Masur appointed both Miss Staples and Miss Kim.

One of the composers closest to the heart of Kurt Masur is Felix Mendelssohn, a founder of the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, the orchestra Masur conducted with such distinction for nearly a quarter of a century before he took up the New York Philharmonic's baton. From Mendelssohn's Incidental Music to Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* we'll hear the Nocturne (with its prominent horn solo) and the feather-light Scherzo.

Another favorite composer of Masur's is Brahms, and the Brahms of the evening will bring to the front of the Avery Fisher Hall stage the man who has been the Philharmonic's concertmaster since 1980, Glenn Dicterow, along with Carter Brey, principal cellist of the orchestra and a Masur appointee in 1996. The music, of course, will be the Brahms Double Concerto for Violin, Cello and Orchestra, of which we'll hear the third movement.

Mr. Dicterow will also have a special role in the "Festival at Baghdad" from Rimsky-Korsakoff's *Scheherazade*, as he plays the intricate violin solo impersonating the seductive voice of Scheherazade herself. This concluding section of Rimsky-Korsakoff's Symphonic Poem is indeed a spotlight item for the entire orchestra, as all the players are given challenges of virtuosity combined with sensitivity.

And finally, the festivities will end with that blockbuster of all orchestral blockbusters, Ravel's *Bolero*. Slowly and methodically the theme and its answer are passed from one orchestral soloist to another, as all the while the dynamic grows louder and louder until the end is a veritable orgy of sound. There is no

more convincing testament to an orchestra's precision and power than *Bolero* and it is the perfect coda to Kurt Masur's years as Music Director of the New York Philharmonic.

This, then, is the remarkable evening of music that awaits us on Thursday, July 18 on the next Live From Lincoln Center telecast. Be sure to check your local listings for the exact day and time of the broadcast in your area. See you then!