

1 Script for NYP 16-43: In Memoriam, Kurt Masur

2 (INSERT NATIONAL UNDERWRITING CREDIT #1)

3 (THEME MUSIC UP AND UNDER TO "X")

4 AB: **And "this" week....(X)**

5 (MUSIC SAMPLE UP AND UNDER - BRAHMS 4TH SYMPHONY
6 AND MASUR SPEAKING)

7 AB: **We honor the memory of the orchestra's Music**
8 **Director Emeritus, Kurt Masur. This is Alec**
9 **Baldwin. I invite you to listen, now, as we**
10 **celebrate Mo. Masur's artistry by hearing him**
11 **lead the Philharmonic in a wide variety of**
12 **repertoire. Naturally, we'll hear him in some**
13 **of his signature works by Brahms, Mendelssohn,**
14 **and Wagner, but we'll also hear him conduct**
15 **works by Duke Ellington, John Adams and Thomas**
16 **Adés. In addition to the music, we'll feature**
17 **audio of Maestro Masur recalling highlights**
18 **from his acclaimed eleven year tenure with the**
19 **Philharmonic in an exclusive interview he gave**
20 **to celebrate his 80th birthday. It's a tribute**
21 **to Kurt Masur.....on The New York Philharmonic**
22 **This Week.**

23 (MUSIC BRAHMS UP AGAIN FOR A FEW SECONDS, THEN FADE
24 OUT)

25 AB: It was on June 16th, 1981 that Kurt Masur
26 conducted the New York Philharmonic for the
27 first time. He was only one month shy of his
28 54th birthday and he had already served as
29 Kapellmeister of the Leipzig Gewandhaus
30 Orchestra for eleven years. During his time in
31 Leipzig, Mr. Masur developed a reputation for
32 disciplined and precise performances that were
33 also authentic and stylish. He became
34 particularly identified with the great German
35 and Austrian masters, such as Beethoven,
36 Mendelssohn, and Schubert. Perhaps it is
37 little surprise then that his Philharmonic
38 debut was comprised entirely of works by Wagner
39 and Strauss. From that historic occasion, we
40 now hear the Prelude to Wagner's opera, Die
41 Meistersinger von Nuremberg. Kurt Masur
42 conducts...the New York Philharmonic.

43 (MUSIC 1: WAGNER DIE MEISTERSINGER OVERTURE)

44 AB: That was the Prelude to Die Meistersinger von
45 Nuremberg by Richard Wagner -the opening work
46 from a concert given at Avery Fisher Hall on
47 June 16th, 1981. The conductor was Kurt Masur
48 in his New York Philharmonic debut.

49 The Chief Music Critic of the New York Times,
50 Donal Henahan, wrote the next day that Maestro
51 Masur was "a superior example of the good
52 Kapellmeister type that a generation or so ago
53 was not hard to find in Central Europe", and he
54 went on to say that he was more than just that,
55 with impressive talent and authority. Mr.
56 Henahan even hinted, prophetically, that maybe
57 one day Maestro Masur might become more
58 permanently associated with the New York
59 Philharmonic.

60 Kurt Masur was born on July 18, 1927 in a small
61 German town called Brieg that was later renamed
62 and is now part of modern-day Poland. He
63 studied piano, composition, cello, and
64 percussion in his youth while also training to
65 be an electrician. At age 16, an inoperable
66 tendon injury to his right hand forced Masur to
67 abandon any notion of a career as a pianist, so
68 after the Second World War ended, he focused on
69 conducting.

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73 Before assuming the role of Kapellmeister in
74 Leipzig—a post he would occupy for 26 years—
75 Masur paid his dues with a wide variety of jobs
76 before being awarded a modest post with the
77 Landestheater Halle. From there, he went on to
78 positions of increasing prominence with the
79 Dresden Philharmonic and the Comic Opera in
80 East Berlin. This slow and programmed course
81 was very much in the spirit of the fabled
82 Maestros of yore—a point Mo. Masur discusses
83 here:

84 (INTERVIEW 1) OUT CUE IS: "I had more than 70
85 different operas I conducted all the time"

86 AB: One of those operas was Wagner's Die
87 Meistersinger von Nuremberg and we now hear
88 another extract from it as performed during Mr.
89 Masur's Philharmonic debut. This time, we hear
90 the bass Hans Sotin as Hans Sachs, the hero of
91 the opera, in the first of two monologues. In
92 this magical scene, Sachs is aroused by the
93 scent of the lilacs in the summer breeze. He
94 recalls a beautiful melody he has just heard
95 sung by Walther, a new but inexperienced
96 entrant in a singing contest for the hand of
97 the beautiful Eva:

98 (MUSIC 2: WAGNER DIE MEISTERSINGER - WIE DUFTET
99 DOCH DER FLIEDER)

100 AB: **Music from Act II of Wagner's opera, Die**
101 **Meistersinger von Nuremberg. That was the**
102 **first monologue by Hans Sachs. Hans Sotin was**
103 **the bass and The New York Philharmonic was**
104 **conducted by Kurt Masur in his debut with the**
105 **orchestra.**

106 **That concert made a strong impression on the**
107 **Philharmonic and Maestro Masur was invited back**
108 **for several guest appearances during the**
109 **ensuing ten years. The emphasis in his**
110 **programming was steadfastly centered on the**
111 **Germanic repertoire for which he was**
112 **celebrated: Handel, Brahms, Schumann,**
113 **Mendelssohn, Strauss and Hindemith (though he**
114 **did also lead a very memorable performance of**
115 **Prokofiev's Romeo and Juliet.)**

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This was precisely the kind of musical nutrition the orchestra needed at the time. In April of 1990, it was announced that Masur would succeed Zubin Mehta as Music Director of the New York Philharmonic. Masur may not have been the most obvious choice for the job, but few would argue that his fearless presence, passion and wisdom were the exact recipe for moving the ensemble forward.

In December of 1990, Kurt Masur was engaged by the Philharmonic to conduct a run of Mendelsohn's oratorio, Elijah. Leonard Bernstein was originally supposed to have led these performances, but his failing health prompted the orchestra to schedule a replacement. This was a prescient move as Mr. Bernstein passed away on October 14th of that year.

A lesser conductor might have been daunted by the prospect of replacing a cultural icon such as Bernstein, but Masur went about his business with typical enthusiasm and attention to detail. The performances were of the touchstone variety; they were overwhelming praised and served as a comforting validation that the Philharmonic had chosen wisely.

146 (EXCERPT TBD)

147 As one might expect, Mr. Masur's first concert
148 as Music Director of the Philharmonic featured
149 one of his signature works: the Symphony No. 7
150 by Bruckner. But - Masur also proved his
151 flexibility that evening when he conducted
152 music by two major American composers: Aaron
153 Copland and John Adams. He approached this
154 repertoire with the same exuberance, color and
155 stylish mastery he brought to the Austro-German
156 Literature. Here, now, from that concert is
157 Short Ride in a Fast Machine by John Adams.
158 Kurt Masur conducts...The New York Philharmonic.

159 (MUSIC 3: ADAMS - SHORT RIDE IN A FAST MACHINE)

160 AB: Recorded September 12, 1991, that was Short
161 Ride in a Fast Machine by John Adams. The New
162 York Philharmonic was led by Kurt Masur in his
163 first concert as the orchestra's Music
164 Director.

165 Throughout his tenure, Maestro Masur immersed
166 himself most passionately in the broad musical
167 culture of the United States. But he also
168 delighted Philharmonic audiences with the kind
169 of repertoire for which he was truly renowned,
170 such as the Symphony No. 4 by Brahms:

171 (INTERVIEW 2) - GOES STRAIGHT INTO MUSIC 4

172 (MUSIC 4: BRAHMS SYMPHONY No 4 LAST MOVEMENT)

173 AB: **Recorded in February, 1995, that was the last**
174 **movement from the Symphony No. 4 by Brahms.**
175 **The New York Philharmonic was conducted by Kurt**
176 **Masur.**

177 **Another composer that featured most importantly**
178 **during Maestro Masur's time as Music Director**
179 **was Felix Mendelssohn. To Masur, the promotion**
180 **of Mendelssohn's music was nothing short of a**
181 **personal mission:**

182 (INTERVIEW 3) OUT CUE IS: "...impact made the
183 world go round".

184 (MUSIC 5: MENDELSSOHN DIE ERSTE WALPURGISNACHT -
185 OVERTURE)

186 AB: **That was the Overture to The First Walpurgis**
187 **Night by Felix Mendelssohn. Kurt Masur**
188 **conducted the New York Philharmonic in that**
189 **performance form February, 2009.**

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192 AB: Ten years earlier, during the height of his 11
193 year residency with the orchestra, Maestro
194 Masur gave the world premiere of a pioneering
195 new work that he had personally initiated. It
196 epitomized the remarkable eclecticism of his
197 tenure in New York and, in particular, his
198 great flair as a performer of American music.
199 He tells us now how Wynton Marsalis's
200 arrangement for big band and symphony orchestra
201 of Duke Ellington's A Tone Parallel to Harlem
202 came about.

203 (INTERVIEW 4 - GOES STRAIGHT INTO MUSIC 6)

204 (MUSIC 6 - ELLINGTON/MARSALIS A TONE PARALLEL TO
205 HARLEM)

206 AB: A daring commission from Kurt Masur - that was
207 the world premiere of Wynton Marsalis's
208 arrangement for big band and symphony orchestra
209 of Duke Ellington's A Tone Parallel to Harlem.
210 It was performed by the combined forces of the
211 New York Philharmonic and the Lincoln Center
212 Jazz Orchestra under the direction of Maestro
213 Masur. The concert took place in Avery Fisher
214 Hall on April 10th, 1999 - mere weeks before
215 the world celebrated the centenary of
216 Ellington's birth.

217 And just seven months later came another bold
218 commission from Kurt Masur and the New York
219 Philharmonic - the world premiere of America: A
220 Prophecy by Thomas Adés. I'm Alec Baldwin, and
221 you're listening to In Memoriam: Kurt Masur...on
222 the New York Philharmonic This Week.

223 (STATION I.D. PAUSE)

224 AB: In the Fall of 1990, Kurt Masur and the New
225 York Philharmonic invited Thomas Adés to join
226 five other composers to present new works under
227 the heading, "A Message for the Millenium."
228 One of the hottest composers of his generation,
229 Adés chose to set some traditional Mayan
230 writings and a Spanish war poem from the 16th
231 Century as a cantata. The poem, by Mateo
232 Flecha, glorifies the soldiers who fight the
233 war not for personal gain, but to bring their
234 faith to the world. The Mayan writings warn of
235 how oblivious they are to the impending
236 collapse of their civilization, singing, "*They*
237 *will come from the east, their god stands on*
238 *the pole; they will burn all the land, they*
239 *will burn all the sky; they will break with a*
240 *cross, oh my nation.*"

241 As you'll hear, Adés contrasts the conflict
242 between the Spanish invaders and the Mayan
243 people in a most disturbing and provocative
244 way.

245 (MUSIC 7 - ADES AMERICA: A PROPHECY)

246 AB: That was the first performance of America: A
247 Prophecy by Thomas Ades. The piece was
248 commissioned by the New York Philharmonic and
249 Kurt Masur as part of the Message for the
250 Millenium project. Mezzo-soprano Beth Clayton
251 was the soloist with the Westminster Symphonic
252 Choir and the New York Philharmonic all
253 conducted by Maestro Masur.

254 Mr. Masur was considerably moved by the work's
255 subject matter as it directly appealed to the
256 strong humanitarian principles he actively
257 upheld throughout his life.

258 Like so much of the world, he was also deeply
259 affected by the events of September 11, 2001.
260 Nine days after the devastating attacks on the
261 World Trade Center, Mr. Masur led the
262 Philharmonic in a nationally performance of the
263 German Requiem by Brahms to honor the fallen:

264 (BRAHMS REQUIEM, IV)

265 AB: "How lovely are Thy dwelling places, Oh Lord."
266 The Fourth Movement from A German Requiem by
267 Brahms. Unlike most requiems, the tone and the
268 message is comforting, with an air of hope.
269 Death is inevitability; but life and beauty go
270 on. The message of music being an agent for
271 healing and peace is what Mr. Masur and the
272 Philharmonic hoped to convey when they
273 performed this work as a memorial to the
274 victims of the September 11 attacks. The New
275 York Philharmonic was joined by the New York
276 Choral Artists in that recording from September
277 20, 2011.

278 We conclude with a work that Mr. Masur
279 conducted both while Music Director of the New
280 York Philharmonic...and again, some 20 years
281 later, as the orchestra's Music Director
282 Emeritus: the Symphony No. 13 by Dmitri
283 Shostakovich.

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289 The work features texts by the poet Yevgeni
290 Yevtushenko, who wrote about the infamous Babi
291 Yar massacre of 1941. Yevtushenko's 1961 poem
292 and its outspoken stand against Soviet anti-
293 Semitism immediately caused great concern
294 amongst the authorities. Shostakovich took a
295 great risk in setting such an incendiary text
296 to music and the resulting symphony was banned
297 after only two performances.

298 Kurt Masur was one of the first conductors to
299 perform this symphony in Soviet controlled East
300 Germany, and he has a very special personal
301 connection with the work, as he first met
302 Yevtushenko shortly after he wrote Babi Yar, in
303 the early 1960s - and not long afterwards he
304 discussed the symphony with Shostakovich.

305 (INTERVIEW 5: OUT CUE IS "..... my performing for a
306 lifetime this symphony")

307 AB: Here, now, are the last two movements of
308 Shostakovich's 13th Symphony from October 27th
309 2011, with the baritone Sergei Leiferkus, the
310 male voices of the New York Choral Artists and
311 the New York Philharmonic. (MUSIC 8 -
312 SHOSTAKOVICH SYMPHONY NO 13 Movements 4 and 5)

313 AB: "We remember the ones that were cursed. I
314 believe in their sacred belief, and their
315 belief gives me courage. I'll follow my
316 career in such a way that I am not following
317 it!" - the closing lines of Shostakovich's
318 13th Symphony - Babi Yar. We've just heard
319 the last two movements from the piece as
320 recorded at Avery Fisher Hall on October 27th
321 2011. Baritone Sergei Leiferkus was the
322 soloist with the male voices of the New York
323 Choral Artists and the New York Philharmonic
324 all conducted by Music Director Emeritus, Kurt
325 Masur.

326 Masur died from complications of Parkinson's
327 disease in December, 2015. He was 88 years
328 old. His legacy continues in the many landmark
329 recordings he leaves behind, as well as the
330 musical stewardship that lives on through the
331 many musicians fortunate enough to work with
332 him.

333 Special thanks to Jon Tolansky and to Kerry
334 Frumkin for their assistance in putting this
335 program together and for use of some of the
336 interview material featured.

337 (ROLL CREDITS)