

1 NYP 17-05: Zubin Mehta at 80

2 (INSERT UNDERWRITING CREDIT #1):

3 (MUSIC: nyp "theme" UP AND UNDER)

4 AB: **...and THIS week...**

5 (MUSIC: Bruckner 8 Up and Under):

6 AB: **We celebrate the musical legacy of a man who has**
7 **led the Philharmonic in more than 1000 concerts...**

8 (MUSIC: Raga-Mala)

9 AB: **A man who has been Music Director on three**
10 **different continents...**

11 (MUSIC: Bruckner 7)

12 AB: **A man who has brought peace, joy and unity into the**
13 **lives of many through the simple power of music:**

14 (MUSIC: Mozart ACT IV Figaro)

15 AB: **Zubin Mehta.**

16 (SLIGHT PAUSE)

17 AB: **I'm Alec Baldwin. Please join me, now, as we**
18 **celebrate Maestro Mehta's long-standing**
19 **relationship with the New York Philharmonic, from**
20 **the 1960s to the present. It's Zubin Mehta at**
21 **80...on the *New York Philharmonic This Week.***

22 AB: Zubin Mehta served as Music Director of the New
23 York Philharmonic from 1978 to 1991. That is the
24 longest tenure of any Music Director in the
25 orchestra's 175 year history.

26 His range of repertoire is enormous. He is fluent
27 in the traditions of the great European masters...

28 (MUSIC BUTTON)

29 AB: ...but he also remains a devoted champion of
30 contemporary music.

31 (MUSIC BUTTON)

32 AB: Whether he's leading a Beethoven Symphony...

33 (MUSIC)

34 AB: ...or a wildly modern piece..

35 (MUSIC)

36 AB: ...there is always a sense of occasion when Zubin
37 Mehta takes the podium. And that's been the case
38 for the entire span of his six-decade career.

39 (MUSIC UP AND OUT)

40 ("INDIA NEWSREEL/1930s MUSIC)

41

42

43 AB: Zubin Mehta was born on April 29, 1936 in what is
44 now Mumbai, India (but what was *then* known as
45 Bombay.) His father, Mehli, founded the Bombay
46 Symphony and was considered to be India's foremost
47 concert violinist:

48 (MUSIC SAMPLE)

49 AB: After briefly pursuing studies in medicine, the
50 young Zubin moved to Vienna in 1954. There, he
51 studied with the eminent conductor Hans [Zvar-OVE-
52 skee] Swarowsky at the Music Academy. (Swarowsky,
53 by the way, was a one-time associate of Richard
54 Strauss.) Mehta studied piano, double-bass, and
55 composition. But it was on the conductor's
56 platform where he truly stood out. His teachers
57 marveled at the young man's effortless ability to
58 assimilate scores. Equally impressive was his
59 strikingly elegant baton technique; his
60 instructions were crystal clear to the orchestra.

61 Zubin Mehta's rise to fame was meteoric. He made
62 his conducting debut in 1958—just four years after
63 his arrival in Vienna. That same year, he won the
64 International Conducting Competition in Liverpool.
65 Shortly after that, he won the Koussevitsky
66 competition in Tanglewood.

AB: His early successes led to an appointment as assistant conductor of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic. And it wasn't long before he was named as the orchestra's Music Director. At an age when many musicians are still deep in the trenches of conservatory life, the 20-something Mehta had already conducted both the Berlin and the Vienna Philharmonics.

AB: The New York Philharmonic can proudly boast that it, too, was among the first international-caliber orchestras to engage Zubin Mehta. His first concerts with them took place at the old Lewisohn Stadium in July, 1960. Mehta had been selected as the Stadium Concerts' *Young Conductor of the Year*. As a result, the handsome young artist was given two programs—one with legendary mezzo-soprano [REE-zuh] Rise Stevens. The other featured cello Aldo Perisot [pare-ee-SOH] and pianist John Browning.

(MUSIC SAMPLES)

91 AB: Just one year later, Zubin Mehta was named Music
92 Director of the Montreal Symphony. In 1962—while
93 still under the age of 30—he began a 14-year tenure
94 with the Los Angeles Philharmonic. Before the
95 decade was through, Mr. Mehta made his debut at the
96 Met and he also began an historic relationship with
97 the Israel Philharmonic that continues to this day.
98 And these are just highlights of a decade teeming
99 with important career milestones.

100 It was in January, 1976, that Zubin Mehta was
101 invited to become the New York Philharmonic's Music
102 Director. Like his predecessor, Pierre Boulez,
103 Mehta had made only a few guest appearances with
104 the orchestra prior to the appointment. It was
105 enough. And it was clear—even after the
106 announcement—that Zubin was to be a different kind
107 of Music Director:

108 (INTERVIEW 3/30/78)(MUSIC SHIFT)

109 AB: Mehta brought with him a fresh attitude towards
110 repertoire, as well as to orchestra politics.
111 Musicians and audiences alike enjoyed his well-
112 balanced programs. Mehta took great care to see
113 that new and less familiar pieces were placed
114 within the right context.

AB: Mehta's expert craftsmanship and charisma also ushered in a Golden Age with regard to guest artists. Marquee names such as Isaac Stern, Artur Schnabel, Placido Domingo and Luciano Pavarotti trusted him implicitly. So did Daniel Barenboim. The two first met in 1956 at a summer school for conductors in Siena. Barenboim was just 13 years old at the time and was already taking the world by storm as a prodigy pianist. They became lifelong friends and in January, 1982, they brought their combined artistry to Avery Fisher Hall. Here's a taste of the Piano Concerto No. 1 by Bartok:

(MUSIC 3: BARTOK PIANO CONCERTO 1)

AB: Daniel Barenboim was the soloist in that excerpt from Bartok's first piano concerto. It was recorded live in January, 1982. The conductor was Zubin Mehta.

(SLIGHT PAUSE)

138 AB: Wilhelm [FOORT-vang-ler]Furtwangler is best
139 remembered today for being one of the preeminent
140 conductors during the first half of the 20th
141 Century. (In fact, he led the world premiere of the
142 Bartok we just heard.) Nevertheless, Furtwangler
143 considered himself to be-- first and foremost-- a
144 composer. Having grown up on the older man's
145 recordings, Zubin Mehta honored Furtwangler's
146 memory in 1986 by conducting the Scherzo from
147 Furtwangler's Symphony No. 2 in e-minor. The
148 concert, which was given to mark the Furtwangler
149 centenary, also featured works by Saint-Saens and
150 Bruckner: A perfect example of Mr. Mehta placing a
151 virtually unknown work into context:

152 (MUSIC)

153 AB: You can hear the influence of Bruckner in that
154 music by Wilhelm Furtwangler. That was the Scherzo
155 to his second symphony as performed in February,
156 1986. The New York Philharmonic was conducted by
157 Zubin Mehta. Later, that evening, Mr. Mehta would
158 conduct Bruckner's Fourth Symphony to further
159 illustrate the musical connections between the two
160 composers.

161 (SLIGHT PAUSE)

162

AB: Mr. Mehta also had a special affinity for the composers of the Second Viennese School. At a time when the appearance of Anton Webern's name on a program could kill ticket sales, Zubin Mehta boldly programmed the composer's *Six Pieces for Orchestra*. And he didn't just do it once. He led over two dozen performances of the work during his residency. He even brought it on tour:

(MUSIC 5: WEBERN - SIX PIECES)

AB: When that music was first performed on March 31, 1913, it was greeted with cat-calls, boos and jeers. Now it is recognized as one of the major achievements of 20th Century music and it is a vital part of what might be called the "new" standard repertory. We heard the *Six Pieces for Orchestra, Op. 6* by Anton Webern. The New York Philharmonic was conducted by one of the composer's greatest advocates, Zubin Mehta.

To help audiences better understand the music, Mehta sometimes included the *Six Pieces* with works by Haydn or Mahler. Other pairings included Varese, Ravel, and Rachmaninoff.

The imaginations of Philharmonic audiences under Mehta's direction were stretched and their worlds were made bigger. And this growth wasn't limited to the European tradition. It included deeper explorations of American music, Latin music, and even Indian Classical Music:

(SITAR EXAMPLE)

AB: In April 1981, the New York Philharmonic welcomed another of India's greatest musical ambassadors to Avery Fisher Hall: Ravi Shankar. Zubin Mehta led the premiere of Mr. Shankar's Second Concerto for Sitar and Orchestra, *Raga-Mala*. The piece was not only played by the Philharmonic, but they commissioned the piece:

(MUSIC)

AB: Ravi Shankar was the sitar player in that excerpt from his Concerto No. 2, *Raga-Mala*. Zubin Mehta conducted the New York Philharmonic in that broadcast recording from April, 1981. That was actually the first time Mr. Shankar and Mr. Mehta worked together professionally. Four years later, they'd again combine their gifts to perform Mr. Shankar's Concerto No. 1 for the Philharmonic's Opening Gala.

(MUSIC SAMPLE)

213 AB: Mr. Mehta also shed new light on composers closer
214 to home. Here he is leading a performance of
215 *Ancient Voices for Children* by West-Virginia native
216 George Crumb:

217 (MUSIC)

218 AB: For all of his pioneering efforts, Zubin Mehta also
219 made sure that his orchestra regularly received
220 "basic nutrition" by playing works by Haydn and
221 Mozart:

222 (MOZART 25)

223 AB: Symphony No. 25 by Mozart. The New York
224 Philharmonic was conducted by Zubin Mehta. I'm
225 Alec Baldwin. We're celebrating the artistry of
226 former Music Director Zubin Mehta...on the New York
227 Philharmonic This Week.

228 (ID)

229 AB: On March 7, 1982, Zubin Mehta led the New York
230 Philharmonic in its 10,000th concert. The program
231 of that Sunday afternoon included just a single
232 work: Mahler's Symphony No.2, "Resurrection." The
233 soloists with Kathleen Battle and Maureen Forrester
234 with the Westminster Choir:

235 (MUSIC)

236 AB: 300 composers, conductors and soloists attended
237 that performance of the Mahler 2nd. President Regan
238 wrote to Zubin Metha and the New York Philharmonic
239 quote, "we are proud that a country as young as
240 ours may lay claim to such an exciting musical
241 accomplishment."

242 (MUSIC SHIFT)

243 AB: Mr. Mehta presided over many important debuts and
244 Philharmonic firsts during his 13 seasons as Music
245 Director. We might mention the first *Horizons*
246 festival of contemporary music. There was the
247 Orchestra's first tour to India. Or there was the
248 time in July, 1986 when the Philharmonic played to
249 800,000 people in Central Park--the largest
250 audience ever assembled for a classical music
251 concert. His residency also saw the U.S. debut of
252 Evgeny Kissin. The professional orchestra debut of
253 Midori. The Philharmonic debuts of Placido Domingo
254 & Luciano Pavarotti. And--the Philharmonic
255 conducting debut of Kurt Masur:

256 (MUSIC)

257 AB: On May 28, 1991 Zubin Mehta led the Philharmonic in
258 a star-studded performance of Arnold Schoenberg's
259 *Gurrelieder*. It was his last concert as the
260 orchestra's Music Director.

261 (MUSIC)

262 AB: Before stepping down from the Philharmonic, Mr.
263 Mehta had already been named as Music Director for
264 Life by the Israel Philharmonic and he was made
265 Chief Conductor of the Maggio Muscale in 1985.
266 He'd also become even more of a household name
267 through the success of the "Three Tenors" concerts,
268 which he conducted. From 1998 to 2006 he was Music
269 Director of the Bavarian State Opera in Munich and
270 he led complete Ring Cycles in Chicago, Munich, and
271 Valencia.

272 (MUSIC)

273 AB: And, of course, Mr. Mehta has returned to guest-
274 conduct his former hometown orchestra in New York
275 more than 20 times. In recent years, those
276 appearances have included two Bruckner Symphonies:
277 The Seventh:

278 (MUSIC)

279 AB: ...and the Eighth:

280 (MUSIC)

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284 AB: Mr. Mehta also led a very memorable performance of
285 the Elgar cello concerto with Alisa Weilerstein as
286 soloist. He said he could see the spirit of his
287 dearly departed friend Jacqueline Du Pre smiling at
288 him during the concert.

289 (MUSIC)

290 AB: Few conductors have as many medals and honors as
291 Zubin Mehta. Few people have done so much as he
292 for art and culture. Together with his brother
293 Zarin he is a co-chairman of the Mehli Mehta Music
294 Foundation in India where more than 200 children
295 are educated in Western Classical Music. The
296 Buchmann-Mehta School of Music in Tel Aviv develops
297 young talent in Israel and is closely related to
298 the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra. He has also
299 created programs that target outreach to young Arab
300 Israelis in the cities of Shwaram and Nazareth with
301 local teachers and members of the Israel
302 Philharmonic Orchestra.

303 AB: Extraordinary Conductor. Leader. Humanitarian.
304 Ambassador. Zubin Mehta at 80.

305 AB: This is Alec Baldwin wishing you good health...and
306 good music.

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