
FELIX MENDELSSOHN BARTHOLDY FOUNDATION

INFORMATION



FELIX-MENDELSSOHN-BARTHOLDY-STIFTUNG
PRÄSIDENT KURT MASUR

July/August 2007

Kurt Masur Gala in Leipzig

Kurt Masur wanted to enjoy a cheerful evening with his guests, not too formal or too serious, so he asked the entertainer Harald Schmidt to join him as presenter in the Leipzig Gewandhaus.

The early birthday concert (the Maestro will be 80 on 18 July) told the musical story of the impressive stages in a musician's rich life – relaxed and humorous with Otto Nicolai's "Merry Wives of Windsor", and with Stanisław Moniuszko's "Halka" whose Mazurka reminded us of the Maestro's origins and name. It was no surprise that Brahms (Liebeslieder waltzes) and Dvorak (2nd Slavonic Dance) were represented in the programme, since he had always given fresh wings to the works of these composers in his Leipzig time. Naturally at the heart of the programme was Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto, outstandingly interpreted by Anne-Sophie Mutter, who kept the audience enraptured so that they did not want her to leave the platform.

Tchaikovsky welcomed us with his glorious "Italian Capriccio". Masur's American period was reflected by Bernstein (West Side Story) and Gershwin (Porgy and Bess), where Harald Schmidt surprised us by brea-

king into song. Dukas' "Sorcerer's Apprentice", representing Kurt Masur's current French connection, led into a rich group of encores, ending in Jobim's "Girl from Ipanema". With this last piece Kurt Masur nodded to Rio de Janeiro, where he had got to know his wife Tomoko.

As anticipated, emotions ran high during evening, so Harald Schmidt's presentation always found a way of making us laugh and feel relaxed.

Among the guests whom Kurt Masur had invited were many friends, including Kofi Annan, Kurt Biedenkopf and Armin Müller-Stahl.

Iris Berben, Kristin Otto, Axel Schulz and other stars were honoured to wish Kurt Masur well on his 80th birthday.

Politics were also represented; Federal Minister Wolfgang Tiefensee, the Prime Minister of Saxony Georg Milbradt, the Lord Mayor of Leipzig Burkhard Jung among others came to offer their congratulations.

One could see that the Maestro felt at ease on the platform of the Gewandhaus, with "his" orchestra and "his" public, who understand him so well, and who also appreciated the aim of the evening to support the Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy Foundation and its ambitions.



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Title: Anne-Sophie Mutter and the Orchestra of the Gewandhaus under Maestro Kurt Masur's direction – it was a special experience to hear their interpretation of Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto in the Leipzig Gewandhaus.

Picture above: The actors Iris Berben and Armin Müller Stahl as honorary guests of the Kurt Masur Gala; the Lord Mayor of Leipzig Burkhard Jung and his wife (right) came to offer their congratulations, too.



This public quickly showed its enthusiasm; within a few hours of the announcement to a selected circle, the concert was sold out, and at handsome ticket prices which are usually only seen in Leipzig for performances by famous rock stars.

The public deserves warm thanks for its spontaneous help, for the support which it demonstrated even during the preparatory work, and for the love for music which was clearly felt in the hall.

Because so many people were so disappointed not to be able to get tickets for the evening, the Gala organisers quickly decided to erect a giant screen in the Augustusplatz. A direct transmission of the concert allowed many more music-lovers to join in the Gala, which had been highlighted by Megalight posters throughout the city.

There was a lively festival atmosphere in the crowded Augustusplatz,

where more than 4,000 Leipzigers and their guests had gathered to follow the Gala on the giant screen.

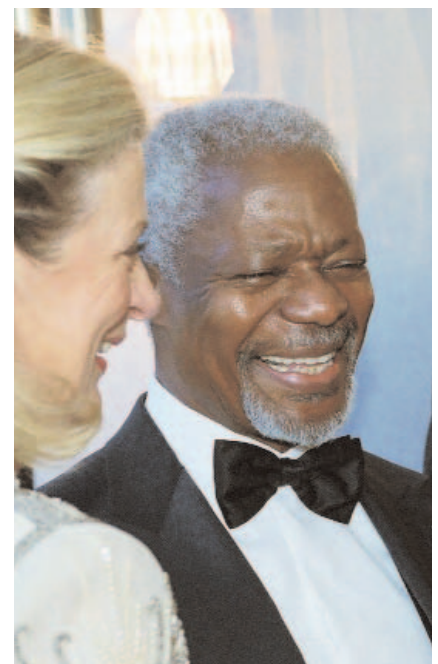
An astonishing number of young people came and experienced the evening sitting on rugs or mats and saw; how Kofi Annan strode along the red carpet into the Gewandhaus; how Kurt Masur spurred on his orchestral musicians in the hall with "Jungs, gebt Feuer!"; how Harald Schmidt recited Goethe's "Sorcerer's Apprentice", and heard Anne-Sophie Mutter honour Maestro Kurt Masur as "an absolute giant", which the Master once more proved at this evening.

Whether in the hall or in the Augustusplatz, the guests were united; this was a successful concert, where the magical joy and lightness was felt directly by the people, who came to honour with many musical friends the great conductor on his birthday, and also to raise money for a meaningful

purpose – the musical education of young people.

The Maestro thanked everyone, and in return for the great pleasure gave them a celebration full of joy and harmony, although also not without the serious moments, which belong together when one looks back over a life of 80 years dedicated to work and art.

Kofi Annan – one of the honorary guests of this special evening.



Mendelssohn Prize



Kurt Masur was presented with the first Mendelssohn Prize of the City of Leipzig in 2007 in recognition of his life's work and his services to Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy. With the words "the City of Leipzig bows to you", at the end of the three-hour concert Leipzig Lord Mayor Burkhard Jung presented

the celebrant with the newly created prize, which will now be given yearly to worthy recipients.

The prize is a miniature replica of the statue created by Jo Jastram, which originally stood in front of the Gewandhaus and is now in the Foyer of the Mendelssohn Hall.

Jung expressed his great thanks to the Maestro, saying "I could not imagine any more worthy first recipient of this prize". He also expressed the desire that Mendelssohn should find the importance in the world which Masur wished for him. One saw the energetic champion of Mendelssohn give a happy and satisfied nod, since naturally such a prize, when awarded annually and in honour of internationally respected personalities, will be heeded way beyond the city boundaries.

The far from weary public watched with enthusiasm the prize-giving, for which Kurt Masur gave touching thanks "I am and was happy here". The Kurt Masur Gala added another important memory to many beautiful other memories.

Let there be more Galas and many worthy prize-winners!

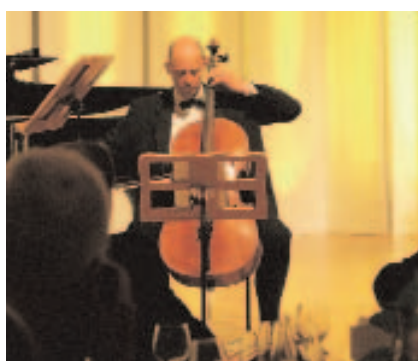
Gala Dinner and more music

After the concert some 250 guests, including prominent representatives of culture, politics and business, were invited to a Gala Dinner in the Mendelssohn Hall.

Various companies, but also many private donors, had made possible this convivial late-night gathering, at which Kofi Annan spoke. "He had much more success than I – he brought musicians and nations together. It was actually harder for him – I had words, and he had only music". Annan praised his friend Kurt Masur, whom he described as a "unique gift for music".

Federal Transport Minister Tiefensee delighted the birthday boy with a serenade on his 'cello, and later the "Prinzen" went onto the stage and offered their cheerful musical congratulations.

The Maestro himself accompanied the festive guests on the piano, as they enthusiastically sang German Volkslieder late into the night. This was Kurt Masur's wish, as he is convinced that singing makes society happier and at one with itself.



Outside and behind the stage: It's all ready – waiting for the guests; last advices for the security staff; also crowd in the kitchen, but good mood



London Birthday Celebrations

On the actual day of his 80th birthday, 18 July 2007, Maestro Kurt Masur will conduct "his" two orchestras, the London Philharmonic Orchestra and the Orchestre National de France, in a Prom concert before a capacity audience of 5,000 people in London's Royal Albert Hall. The programme will consist of two works dear to the Maestro, Tchaikovsky's Serenade for Strings, and Bruckner's 7th Symphony, and will be broadcast live on BBC Radio Three. On the evening before, Lady Maiko Rothermere will host a black tie dinner for invited guests in historic Spencer House. After the concert the French Ambassador in London, Gérard Errera, will invite the members of both orchestras to a Reception in his Residence, when he will confer on the Maestro the "Grand Officier de la Légion d'Honneur".

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