

LIVE FROM LINCOLN CENTER
January 28, 2004, 8:00 p.m. on PBS
New York Philharmonic
Thomas Quasthoff Performs Mozart

In one of his infrequent visits to the United States, Riccardo Muti returns as guest conductor of the New York Philharmonic for a series of performances at the end of January, bringing with him the German bass-baritone, Thomas Quasthoff, as soloist. Live From Lincoln Center will be in Avery Fisher Hall with its cameras and microphones on Tuesday evening, January 28, to bring the concert into your homes. Opening the concert will be Schubert's "Rosamunde" Overture, to be followed by four concert arias by Mozart for bass-baritone and orchestra. Following the intermission, Maestro Muti will conduct the Second Symphony by Brahms.

Riccardo Muti is one of the most illustrious conductors on today's music scene. Music Director of the legendary La Scala Opera in Milan since 1986, he has served previously as Principal Conductor of the Florence May Festival Orchestra and London's Philharmonia Orchestra. His 12-year tenure as Music Director of the Philadelphia Orchestra, from 1980 to 1992, was one more golden period in that orchestra's century-long history. Riccardo Muti comes to the New York Philharmonic just a few weeks after conducting the Vienna Philharmonic's traditional New Year's celebration (also televised by PBS). Previous collaborations between Muti and the Philharmonic have produced memorable music-making. The concert on January 28 promises a continuation of that tradition.

Bass-baritone Thomas Quasthoff has emerged in recent years as one of the most remarkable singers of our time. His remarkable voice served him well as a teacher and radio personality before he decided to devote himself to singing. Since then, he has been eagerly sought-after by orchestras, conductors and concert presenters the world-over. Last April he made a highly-acclaimed operatic debut in Salzburg in the role of Don Fernando in Beethoven's "Fidelio" with Sir Simon Rattle and the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra.

During the last decade of his life, Mozart was asked by a number of singers (mostly sopranos!) to compose arias they could either sing in concert or interpolate into operas. One of them was the bass Karl Ludwig Fischer, who had created the role of Osmin in Mozart's "The Abduction From the Seraglio." For Fischer Mozart composed the aria "Cosi dunque tradisci...Aspri rimorsi atroci" to be interpolated in a production in Vienna of an opera by one Bernasconi. Some years later, again for Fischer, Mozart composed "Alcandro, lo confesso...Non so d'onde viene" for concert performance. "Rivolgete a lui lo sguardo" was originally meant to be part of Mozart's own "Cosi fan tutte." And "Per questa balla mano," Mozart's last concert aria for bass, was written for Franz Gerl, the

first Sarastro in Mozart's "The Magic Flute." All four Mozart concert arias to be sung by Thomas Quasthoff have never before been performed by the New York Philharmonic.

Mozart the symphonist had little trouble in producing more than two score works in the form, many of them imperishable masterpieces. Brahms, on the other hand, was a late-developing symphonist---or rather, he was late in committing himself with a work of full symphonic dimensions. But once he had taken the risk and offered his First Symphony to a waiting world, he quickly followed it with another. The result was his Symphony No. 2 in D Major, the sunniest, most cheerful of his four Symphonies. The premiere was given in December 1877, just thirteen months after the premiere of his First Symphony.

The Second Symphony quickly made its way into the international concert repertoire. Two weeks after the first performance, Brahms himself conducted it in Leipzig; then Joseph Joachim introduced it in Dusseldorf and Brahms conducted a performance in Hamburg. Within a year, the Symphony was performed in London and New York. From the very beginning perceptive commentators have found a mood of sunny exuberance in the work. Brahms himself, in a letter to the Viennese critic Eduard Hanslick, called the Symphony "cheerful and likable", and C. F. Pohl, writing after the initial rehearsals, said, "It brims with life and strength, deep feeling and charm. Such things are made only in the country, in the midst of nature." Indeed, the warm lyricism and sunny romantic flavor of the music are lastingly engaging. Though the Symphony has no sub-title, it well might be called Brahms's "Pastoral" Symphony. The pervading feeling is one of idyllic serenity-despite the brooding melancholy of the slow movement-and the closing pages are among the most rousing exuberant outpourings in all symphonic literature.

Schubert, Mozart and Brahms. Riccardo Muti and the New York Philharmonic. Thomas Quasthoff. What a heady combination of musical titans-all part of our next Live From Lincoln Center presentation on Tuesday evening, January 28. As usual, I urge you to consult your local PBS station for the exact date and time in your area.

See you then!