



**December 31, 2007, 8:00pm on PBS**  
**New York Philharmonic New Year's Eve Gala with Joshua Bell**

In September Live From Lincoln Center observed one of its longtime traditions: the Gala opening concert of the new season of the New York Philharmonic. On December 31 we'll re-invent another longtime Live From Lincoln Center tradition: the Gala New Year's Eve concert by the New York Philharmonic. Music Director Lorin Maazel will be on the podium for a program of music appropriate for the festive occasion, and the guest artist will be the acclaimed violinist, Joshua Bell.

I first encountered Joshua Bell at the Spoleto Festival, U.S.A. in Charleston, South Carolina. He was then barely into his teens but he was already a formidable violinist, playing chamber music with some of the world's most honored musicians. Not long afterward he burst upon the international scene at what was described as "a sensational debut" with the Philadelphia Orchestra and its Music Director of the time, Riccardo Muti.

Joshua Bell was brought up in Bloomington, Indiana, where his father was a Professor at Indiana University. I.U., as it is known in academia, is an extraordinary university, with a School of Music that is world-renowned. Among its outstanding faculty was the eminent violinist Josef Gingold, who became Josh's inspired (and inspiring) mentor and devoted friend. Indeed it was the presence of Gingold in Indiana that led to the establishment of the Indianapolis International Violin Competition. One way for a young musician to attract attention is to win one of the major international competitions. But Joshua Bell did not have to go the Competition route: that Philadelphia Orchestra debut set him on the course that has made him one of the outstanding artists of our time.

Between then and now the not-yet 40-year old violinist has entered into the Pantheon of performing artists, appearing before sell-out audiences wherever he plays. Indeed, a few years ago we of Live From Lincoln Center were privileged to present Joshua Bell in an informal program at the Penthouse of Lincoln Center's Rose Building. At the forthcoming New Year's Eve concert he will play a variety of violin favorites, including the Introduction and Rondo Capriccioso by Saint-Saëns, Fritz Kreisler's "Liebesleid" ("Love's Sorrow") and Ravel's "Tzigane."

For their part, Maazel and the Philharmonic will entertain with some of music's best-known and best-loved works, beginning and ending with pillars of the French orchestral repertoire: Dukas's "The Sorcerer's Apprentice" and Ravel's "Bolero." For many of us "The Sorcerer's Apprentice" is indelibly associated with the masterful animation of the score that graced the 1940 Walt Disney film, "Fantasia," with Leopold Stokowski conducting an orchestra of Hollywood's best studio musicians. (When the decision was made to expand on "The Sorcerer's Apprentice" and produce a full-length feature film, the added music was played by Stokowski and the Philadelphia Orchestra.)

Ravel's "Bolero" needs, of course, very little introduction. Composed at the end of The Roaring Twenties it remains an astonishing example of creative manipulation--but manipulation in the best sense of the word. It begins with a hushed rhythmic pattern played by the snare drum. Very soon, and over the drum's rhythm, a theme is announced by the solo flute. Then that flute theme is passed from solo instrument to solo instrument, and from section to section. The music becomes louder and louder, with the snare drum beating out its rhythm incessantly. Suddenly there is a harmonic change and the ending is a disintegration tantamount to a cataclysm. What a piece!

So those are some of the musical treats that await us this New Year's Eve, Monday evening, December 31: Lorin Maazel and the New York Philharmonic, with guest artist, violinist Joshua Bell. And as always I leave you with the suggestion that you contact your local PBS station for the exact time and date of the telecast in your area, since some stations along the network carry the program on a tape delay basis.

Enjoy....and a Happy New Year to you all!

By MARTIN BOOKSPAN