

Allan Morgenthau in Conversation with Maxim Vengerov

- Good afternoon. Good evening, everybody. This afternoon I'm honoured to welcome Maxim Vengerov, who will be in conversation with my friend Allan Morgenthau. At 45 years of age, and university hailed as one of the world's greatest living string players, numerous Grammy, Brit, and Gramophone Award winner Maxim Vengerov has received prestigious fellowships and honours from a number of institutions, including the Royal Academy of Music. He was awarded an honorary visiting fellowship at Trinity College Oxford, and holds an honorary doctorate from the Royal College of Music. Maxim Vengerov was the first classical musician to be appointed Goodwill Ambassador for UNICEF.

He holds positions as a professor at the Royal College of Music, and the Mozartian University Salzburg. Vengerov has been profiled in a series of documentaries, including "Playing by Heart," which was recorded by Channel Four television and screened at the Cannes Television Film Festival and Living Green, which was released worldwide and received the Gramophone Award for best documentary in 2008. Allan Morgenthau has spent his working life on the creative side of advertising and marketing. He was creative director of before opening his own agency. Allan has served on the board of many UK charities, including WJR and the London Jewish Cultural Centre, where he was chairman for five years, working closely with Treaty Gold to turn what was an adult education centre into a cultural centre.

In 2008, Allan created the Cultural Jewish Awards where he first met today's guest, Maxim Vengerov, who was presented with a lifetime achievement award. Allan serves as chairman of the Hamstead Marine Hospice Development Committee, and is a for The Prince's Trust, where he also runs marketing workshops. Thank you, Allan, and thank you Maxim. It is an honour to have you here. We are looking forward to tonight's presentation. And I'll hand it over to you. Thank you.

- Thank you very much, Wendy.

- Wendy, thank you. Thank you. Wonderful too to speak to you. Allan, great to see you.

- Nice to see you Maxim. Good evening ladies and gentlemen, I'm delighted to welcome you to this webinar with our very special guest, Maxim Vengerov. While I was researching for this conversation, I looked up when we first met, and Maxim, as I'm sure you'll recall, it was when I presented you with a cultural ambassador award at the Jewish Cultural Awards in 2004, that long ago, in support of the London Jewish Cultural Centre. We held a post-awards party at our house in honour of the winners. And on looking at the photos, I found a photograph of Wendy Fisher who was at the party, and who sponsored the very award you won. So it seems very fitting that we are here today on Wendy's platform.

Now, as I've got to know you better over the years, Maxim, I'm 16 years. 16 years. I also know you are not somebody who enjoys looking backwards very much. I think you're somebody who

prefers to look forward. We'll come to the looking forward in a minute, but I'm sure the listeners, the viewers tonight, will want to know about your amazing musical career. And so I hope you'll indulge me if I just spend first part of the interview with you to follow that amazing path, and bringing us up to date. I do apologise.

- Allan, it's great, great to talk to you. And-

- It would be if I didn't lose my notes.

- Allan. Since we met the first time, yes, at the Cultural Awards, it was a amazing great honour for me to receive that. But since then, as you can see, I have a few grey hair, you know, so things have changed. Well, we are still young.

- Well, I think my grey hair is no longer a matter of partial, it's total. Maxim, I want to first ask you, when was it that you first started to play? Was it when you were five year, sorry, in public? It was when you were five years old, wasn't it?

- Yes, in public. It was my first concert at the age of five. Yes. And I remember shooting one documentary, Living the Dream with the Ken Howard, which was commissioned for the BBC Channel. And so he counted that. I said, I remember when I was five, at least 30 times. So-

- Do you remember what you played?

- I remember I played during this concert, which was in was for large audience of about 500 people. So it was a big hall, and it was fully packed because as strange as it sounds, but actually it was a very cultural centre in Russia. Yeah. So there was a philharmonic orchestra where my dad played oboe. My mother led choir with kids. She had 500 kids. There were ballet, opera house, which was very, very famous in Russia, and had a fantastic production. So I was raised, I was a child of music, and I was put in a, was very lucky to be born in that environment. All my teachers came from initially.

So this first concert, it was anticipated by large audiences, but I was one of many musicians. So there was in fact, nothing special about me because there were about, you know, 10 or 15 others, and there was weekly performances of young, start virtuosos, so to say. So there was a great sense of concurrence and competition, which was stimulating-

- Okay, we'll come back to that topic. But when you say there was nothing special about you, just 10 years later you won the prestigious Carl Flesch International Competition, and a year later you emigrated with your parents to Israel and studied at the Jerusalem Academy. You now live in Monaco, and you had a flat in London. You still have family and strong connections to Russia. Where is your emotional home, and how important is Israel to you?

- You know, my roots are deeply grounded in Russia, for obvious reasons. All my education

happened in and I can call myself an 80% educatee from the St. Petersburg School, which is very famous, both in violin and also conducting studies. So, because I know also conducting and playing, so my educational side and my musical upbringing took most of the part initially in Russia. And then I went to study in Germany in Lubeck, for two years, in the school of music, then immigrated to Israel. And Israel became also my very dear home where I had my grandparents, my grandmother lived until 96, so she passed away on this March.

So, you know, bless her heart and soul. So, you know, still all my family is in Israel, and we have a vacation home in the north of Israel in Tiberias, in the Lake of Tiberias in a very, very beautiful place there. So, my heart and soul is in Israel, and split between Israel, Russia, and the rest of the world, actually.

- I was going to say, you are a musician of the world, and while you were in Israel, Maxim, sorry, you founded the Musicians of Tomorrow. Can you tell us about this?

- The Musicians of Tomorrow programme in Israel was initiated during the crisis of the north, with the war in the north of Israel. And I remember when I came to Israel for the first time, it was during 1990, that's when there was a Conflict of Gulf, Gulf War, if you remember, with Iraq. And I remember I was in the philharmonic house, we were wearing the gas masks, and I was, you know, all I wanted to do is to go and play for people because during this crisis, all my heart was going, and all my initiatives were directed towards music, and playing for people, 'cause these were the, the only thing that I could want to do during this time.

So, every time there was a conflict in Israel, I always came up with different initiatives. When there was a crisis in the South, I played the concert in Beersheba, and we had the Azaka, you know, we had the alarm going on when the bombs were falling, and we had to interrupt the performance, go to the bunker. Finally in the 2006, we decided for a new initiative that is incredibly successful today, Musicians of Tomorrow, all the children, regardless of their social status, so to say, you know, so, they're provided with music lessons, and they come from very poor families. So we have wonderful teachers there, Anna Rosovsky, who is teaching them. And we have already alumnus from this programme, which is, and they're already adults, so today's 2020. So they are 20 years old.

And I have seen them when they were just starting at age of four or five. It's amazing. When you plant a seed, when you see it grows into something very beautiful, you understand there is a purpose. You've done that for, and there is nothing more pleasing to your heart to witness that grow.

- There might be one thing more pleasing, and that is when you can witness your own children becoming musicians. So I'll ask you about that, and we'll come back to that again later. But one question, I know your young daughters are musicians, how different is the way you teach them, or participate with their musical life, to the early years of your life? I presume it's a very different approach.

- No, it's a very different approach. Very difficult question because you know, the society in Soviet Union was a different country from what it is today in Russia, you know, and you know, being born Jewish, as a Jewish kid, all you wanted is actually to have a, like a green pass, green card somewhere. And for me, the greatest, the path would be to go to Moscow, you know, to start with. And so for that you had to excel in what you're doing. And when I picked up the violin, so, you know, I thought this was going to be my future.

I already knew that the violin is going to be my passion, my bread and butter so to say. And also my, you know, call it vehicle, to get to know the world. And so it was, and at the age of seven, I was invited by the Central Music School, which was run by the conservatory of music in Moscow. I went there with my teacher, and I studied there for four years.

- Maxim, I know that our audience would love to hear you play, and I've only selected a short piece because the main purpose today is to talk to you and hear what you have to say. But I don't think we could let an hour go by without letting the audience hear just how brilliant you are. So I've chosen, without your permission a piece, it's the Capric Number 24 by Paganini. And if anything shows your virtuosity, it's this short clip. Well that was wonderful. Maxim, who are the greatest influences on you as a violinist and in what way?

- Well, I grew up of course with all the great recordings of David Oistrakh, who was a great idol. But I remember also at the age of 11, when I listened to the recordings of Jascha Heifetz, and Isaac Stern, and they influenced me equally greatly, you know, in so many ways. Each of them were really, it's like a, the universe in themselves. So I could learn so much. But not only them, but also cellists. I had a great mentor, who I recorded with for 17 years, and took lessons with. Also Daniel Barenboim, who has been an enormous influence on me as a conductor. And I also played with him being, you know, him being on the piano. So I've been very lucky with my teachers and mentors, extremely, extremely lucky.

- That's bit more than luck. I mean, but that is, what amazing masters to have, and for you to live up to, which you did. You are the Polanski Visiting Professor of violin at the Royal Academy. You're trying to also set up the violin-

- Royal College. Sorry, Royal College.

- Sorry, at Royal College, sorry, the Royal College.

- Yes.

- There is a difference. I don't want to meet you an artist as well as a violinist. You're trying to set up a violin music academy in Monaco, and now you are about to launch a foundation of your own to help struggling musicians as a result of COVID. And we'll come back to that in depth later. But I want to ask you, how do you manage your time? How do you relax? And how do you

practise music?

- Well, you know, about relaxing, one great musician's and philosopher, Manwin, you know, said, you know, when they ask me, when they ask him, you know, how do you relax? He said, it's very simple, I never get tense. I think it's, you know, what is important is enjoyment, always you need to enjoy, you have to find every incentive to be happy in music, 'cause music is for happiness, and we're musicians, we are blessed that we can do something that we call our job, but it's actually is more than a job, it's a lifestyle. It's philosophy. Some people, even some musicians refer it, to it being a religion. And so for me, being a musician is really blessed, blessing.

- It certainly is a gift. You love teaching, I know that. Whether it's with a masterclass or in a music academy. What do you think makes a good teacher, and apart from the obvious needs for talent, what makes a great student?

- I always thought that, you know, you need to, when you're a student, you don't have to have only the talent to play, but also you need to have a greatest talent for learning, because you see, you meet the teacher, and the teacher may not be always what you expect him or her to be. So it is incredibly difficult and complex to find your own match. So I learned, I had amazing teachers, but we were not always in harmony.

You know, there was a lot of disagreements, which is quite normal, but I could, I learned to filter the messages that would come from them. And I also, these disagreements, I took it in a positive way, and I could, when I'm teaching today, I understand that what is really important is that you teach that student today, and it's not about you, it's about what this student, is this student, girl, boy, you know, young man, or young girl, are they ready to listen to your advice and what you're going to say? How is it going to be, you know, how do they going to be impacted by that? Positively or negatively? Because every word can be twisted in many different directions. There is always two sides of the coin.

And that's why being a teacher means always that you are more than a teacher. You are, if you want even, you know, you have to have the psychology behind that, you know, you have to be sometimes psychiatrist to your students. And that I've learned being teacher for four years when I had my class of 12 students. So I learned, I learned to be just more than a teacher to them.

- I assume that the wrong form of teaching could be incredibly destructive. Somebody's confidence could be shattered for life. One has to know how strong the student is, which is the, but do you nurture them? Do you protect them? Or sometimes do you have to be really tough with them? I presume it depends on the student.

- Yes. I, you know, I grew up in this society when being nice to student was sort of not in fashion, you know, you need to be almost an evil. You know? So, you know, otherwise, if you're too nice then you know that, you know, you're worth very little, you know, in the eyes of the person.

Today, you know, when my kids are studying music, I don't see it this way, you know, for them in the end of the lesson, I want them to see, I want them to be full of light, full of inspiration. And not, they just learn something about music.

They learn their skills, their crafts, but they get something out of it that the energy of the teacher is transmitted directly to a student. And there is this bond between them. And this is how I also teach, because for me, each lesson is one little drop, one little seed that you plant. And it may not, the tree may not grow tomorrow. It usually never does that way, you know, but in a few, in some time, in a few years, you see your results, and that's what matters.

- Fantastic. Maxim, apart from classical music, what other forms of music do you enjoy?

- For me, I don't classify the music in classical, or pop, or jazz. You know, for me there's two types of music, great music, and not so great music. So the not so great music, I try to avoid playing.

- Yeah.

- And also listening, because it doesn't give me the inspiration. So for instance, if I'm about to play the concerto, if I'm asked to play concerto that I'm not really passionate with, how can I advocate for this music? How will the audience enjoy it if I don't? So for me, I love equally pop music, beautiful, wonderful songs. You know, for instance, my family, my kids, they enjoy Beatles. You know, this is the latest thing during this lockdown, we spent four month lockdown in our in my parents law house in Russia next to St. Peterburg. And we listen every day to Beatles and Billie Eilish. So-

- It's not what I would've imagined, but there you are. So I know you play the Kreutzer 1727 Stradivarius. I'm not sure, I really am not sure if I imagined this, but did we once have a conversation where you told me that you left the violin at a cafe on the table? Or is it a figment of my imagination?

- Not only once, Allan, you know, I'm very embarrassed to say. Now, post fact, you know, I can talk about it, but if I would reveal the truth at the time, I would be, you know, literally crucified. I remember, I got the loan from the LVMH foundation, and it was not this Kreutzer Stradivarius that I play now, but it was also late period, fantastic Strad, called the And I just got it and I was totally in love with it. But after the, you know, speaking of being relaxed, and how do you relax, all right, so after concert, I have always this tendency that I play the concert, it was very intense. So I forget that I'm musician, I have no musical sounds, I have no interest in music. And if I go somewhere in the taxi, for instance, you know, in the taxi driver or driver says, you know, what music do I prefer? And I say silence.

So, once I got into the cafe, I was 19, I was in with my mom, and I put down the violin, we had the dinner, and then we left, and we drove a hundred kilometres away until I remembered that I

left the violin from this, from LTC Foundation. So I was in greatest shock. So I came back rushing like a rocket, and luckily the violin was standing there. So I think my mind protects me. It wants to just relax.

- Well, that must be, to have that nature is probably the only way with things like travel, the schedules that have to change. I mean, if one is over tense, I can't imagine every every concert hall there will be different challenges. So it's obviously very much in your personality not to get overwhelmed by trivial nonsense. Maxim, as a conductor and as a soloist, you're centre stage, but you also play chamber music, and that's a very different dynamic. I presume that collaborative relationship, that very intimate relationship, is also very important to you.

- Chamber music has always played, it was always integral part of my career. And at this moment when I go for to teach in the University of part of the master classes that I give, I give chamber music, I play with musicians, and I give masterclasses, it's a wonderful form of communicating to the young colleagues, artists, to share my thoughts about music and to play with them. And sometimes what you cannot actually say with words, you can express with music. And to have this instant connection with musicians, this kind of unique, is like a telepathy. Without words, you hear and you understand each other.

It's kind of magic. So chamber music is very important to me. This year we planned the concert in Royal Albert Hall to celebrate my 40th anniversary on stage. It's hard to imagine, I'm 45, my first concert was at age of 5. So I invited my dear friends Martha Arre and great cellist Micha Maki, to join me on the special concert accompanied by Mars Papadopoulos the conductor and the Oxford Harmonic Orchestra to share the stage in Albert Hall. But unfortunately due to, the COVID 19 came up, and so this concept will be postponed to the 20th of April next year, to which I really welcome you.

- So will my tickets that I had for the first concert be redeemable against the next one? Because I was so looking forward to that, it's great to know that there's a new date in the diary, the 20th of April, will remember that. Thank you Maxim. You've recorded all the great violin concertos many, many years ago, then after an injury, you used that time to further your study of conducting, and you became a conductor, an added conducting to your repertoire, and you do both around the world. But has becoming a conductor changed how you then play the violin? And when you go back to pieces of violin that you may have recorded and left behind, is it different? Do you see it in a different way as a result of having been a conductor, or being a conductor?

- You know, just to draw parallel, you know, if you come to the DP, you know, you coming, you know to the doctor, and you have a problem in one part of the body, and you know that this doctor is specialising in, specialising in heart, or specialising in somewhere. But if you know that this doctor doesn't know anything else about the body and about the health, you wouldn't trust him or her, right? So, you know, or you know, you would go to someone who knows and can discover a problem. Maybe it's not the heart, I'm just speaking, you know, in general. The same thing is about, you know, if you, it's not enough only to be an excellent violinist, you know,

because for the repertoire and the concertos, how they're written by greatest composers like Brahms, for instance, to take in, or Beethoven, they're written like big symphonies. And when you are a soloist, of course you play the main part, and you are accompanied by the orchestra. But you wouldn't call it an accompaniment, it's a symphony with a violin integral part. Like it's inside the orchestra texture, and you have to react to all the voices, and you have to be intact with the conductor.

So, you know, I have my first recording, which I made with Daniel Barenboim at the age of 22. And when I listened back to it, it's a lovely recording and, but I remember at that time when I, when Barenboim would point something in the score, and say, I suggest you do this and that, I understood that that time I couldn't fully comprehend what he was saying, 'cause what he was actually meant is that I didn't have enough knowledge about the orchestra score. So when I teach now, after becoming conductor myself, when I teach my students, I encourage them to study the whole score, and also to have, I teach them also conducting.

So they have a basic understanding of how to play with orchestra, how to lead an orchestra, and how to integrate your musical lines with them. Then as a result, you have a fuller comprehension of what the concerto is. So that has influenced me enormously to become a conductor. And very often a part of my teaching at the Royal College of Music, I give the orchestral masterclasses, where we give chance to young people to try concertos, to try to work on the concertos with the student orchestra, without actually any stress. I'm standing as a conductor, and I'm leading this masterclass. So they are playing with the orchestra, and I'm giving them the comments, and I lead the orchestra.

- Maxim, I'd now like to turn to music making today, before we come right up to the present time. Even before Coronavirus, in 2017, an all party parliamentary group in the UK reported on musical education in our schools. And it makes appalling reading. There was a fall of over 20% in GCSE music entries since 2014-15, secondary music teacher's number had fallen by a thousand. And this is despite the fact that music contributes 4.5 billion gross to the UK economy, and 2.6 billion export revenue in 2017 alone. Is this pattern true in most countries that you visit? And what do you think needs to be done about it?

- I think everything goes from the top, from the government. This is, you know, I was lucky to be born in the society, which was, as we all know, very, very, very far from normal. But music and all the greatest values, you know, cultural values, they were right at the top. Just to give you an example, if you were an orchestra musician, you were a privileged persona, so to say, you know, and people looked up to you, you know, to go to concert hall, you had to, you know, you had to earn that right, that privilege.

The concert halls were packed, and you could, you had to book tickets long in advance, you know, to go to the opera. So all the orchestras in Russia, in Soviet Union, they were, musicians were very privileged, you know, in all the music, in all the cities, in all the music schools, music was compulsory, was mandatory. And, correct me if I'm wrong, 25 or 30 years ago in UK, music

was compulsory in the-

- [Allan] Yes.

- At schools. I think it was a tendency all over that the music is in education, it brings values, not only the sports, but you know, body, and soul, and spirit. So music was presented as a spiritual art, spiritual food. Whether today we don't speak about it in these ways, you know, it's obvious to say yes music, it is spiritual food, but we are as human beings, we need not only to nurture ourselves with food and water, but also with music, with art, go to museums, reading, love, everything belongs to our humans, is not only about survival, I feel sometime, you know, when people talk about arts, and generations, you know, really being wiped out, you know, especially today with the crisis today, COVID 19, musicians lost all the abilities to earn. And not every government support them. So basically musicians are left with nothing, you know, who had a little savings can still survive.

Others don't have the support. So I'm wondering whether life is all about survival. I think we have to, I think we need to grow into, and go into another dimension, evolution of human beings, where the cultural values, moral values, along with moral values, should grow. Not only the financial markets and everything, I think, you know, also the humanity should evaluate the human values also, like the stock market. I would say this is important and we should invest in this. And it's investment, long-term investment, it's not, yes, it's right. What people are scared that if I invest something, I want to get yes, I should get return, instant return. It is not, it's a long-term investment.

- I'm sure the audience would agree with that wholeheartedly. And there are so many wonderful examples in the world where music has transformed lives. I mean, the sustainer, or last week on British television, there was a wonderful documentary about the Kanneh-Masons family. Seven young people locked together in their Nottingham house. The empathy between them, the musical, the shared experience was so enormous, it was very moving. But for the moment, musicians are actually facing an existential crisis.

I mean, their salaries, as you've alluded to, most of 'em are freelance. It, there's no date that people know when they're going to be playing again. And I know you are very concerned about this, and being Maxim Vengerov, concern isn't enough. You are intent in doing something about it. So can you please tell us what you are going to do, and what your plans are?

- Yes, with this COVID 19, you know, it's triggered me to think hard, you know, how to help efficiently, musicians. And those are not only performers that we're speaking about. What about teachers? What about mentors? Great musical mentors that are facing same crisis. You know, people speak about musicians that are performing, but there are amazing teachers that are deprived of teaching, and so are the students, kids, are deprived of the lessons. So this crisis bring brought up the new initiative that I'd like to call the action to democratise the access to music learning, to create a platform to support mentors who are out of work for this moment. We

would love to create a platform that would give possibility for mentor to take lessons with the young students, be it a child, or be it a advanced student, albeit even a amateur, we'll give 10% of lessons to amateurs, because this is also music learning is fun for some people. So I would like to stream it live to the wider audiences to give their world global access to people.

So this, I'll be giving myself three lessons per week, which are going to be free, and maybe a performance online. So I'm going to be teaching with the, taking students from the universities that I teach in Royal College of Music, Salzburg Mozartarium, Music Amundi is the school for kids, and that are based in Brussels. Institute in Moscow, as well as MIAGI a very dear project to my heart, which we initiated with a wonderful friend of mine, Robert Brooks from South Africa. This MIAGI project, the abbreviation of this is music is a great investment, and it brings children from different ethnic groups, white and black children, regardless of their race, they get equal opportunities to study music.

And so I'll be giving masterclasses to them. Plus, one very interesting initiative, we'd like to call action, you know, and to, like a lottery, a lucky ticket. So once a week there'll be a lucky ticket from anywhere practically, you know, any continent. And we're working with the latest technologies that are allowing us to stream these lessons in the best quality. And we're also, we are always developing new technology, and putting them together because this is, at this moment, during this crisis, the online teaching became very, very, very important to stream the live and to have the interaction between teacher and the student in the best quality. 'Cause classical music and the teaching requires that with minimum delay, and with the best sound.

- Fantastic. How is this going to be funded?

- We hope to get the sponsors for that, you know, either a main sponsor, we're looking into ideally a quarter of a million euros, or hopefully pounds, although they're the same today. And, but, the initiative, everything goes towards to support of a mentor. Every mentor performer will get 7,000 per lesson. So we get, we'll accommodate as many lessons as we get the funds for.

- And will I pay to view this online, or how will that work?

- You would have to pay very little, three euros. Just a symbolic fee to log in.

- On that one. I just want to digress for a second. The National Theatre in London, great orchestras have been giving away their product over the last few months. I understand one part of the logic, it's they want to stay in touch with their audience, but if I look at some of the figures of what they actually raised, it's really frighteningly low. Do you think there was a mistake in giving away these free performances? I mean, for example, I think the Vienna Philharmonic had a concert. I think they raised a very small amount of money.

What's your view on the free platform that people have had? Because we could just sit at home for weeks now, just watching theatre, music, and without paying us a penny for it.

- In the way we are as consumer, as audiences, are very spoiled.

- Yeah.

- [Maxim] In this way. Because music on internet became, since probably a decade. Yeah, at least a decade, for free. Everywhere streams out there, concerts at this. So we are in the comfortable position to think that music is free, but actually musicians are just another profession. You know, it's another profession. Moreover, as a musician, you start your journey as early as the age of four or five. And sometimes if you start at the age of seven, it's too late, maybe too late. Because you need to learn, whether violin, or piano, at the very early stages of your life. So the commitment is incredible for what you hope to get. You know? So as a musician, you don't think about what you're going to earn.

But in action, as a matter of fact, you need to survive. You need to buy expensive bows, instruments, violins, or cellos. You know? So you need to consider that fact that music is another profession, and we need to support it. You know, like you, you know, if you hire a lawyer or you go to hairdresser, or you know, cleaning and all these things, this are services. Music is a service. It's a service to our soul, yes, but it's a service.

- Well, I really hope that this succeeds because it's so, so important right now. You just mentioned that perhaps seven years old could be too late. Well, I've got a little surprise for you now, and I've also got a surprise for our audience. I hope seven and eight isn't too late, because once again, Maxim, with your unusual generosity and supporting a charity, I found that you have recorded, and we are about to see, you playing the violin with your two daughters, one piece on the piano, and one piece on the cello. And it's just beautiful to see. So let's watch this now. Bravo, that was wonderful.

- Yes, thank you.

- And now let's hear your other daughter.

- Yes.

- I think it's lined up. If we can't do that right now- Ah. Maxim, I don't know what to say. I mean, that was so moving. I'm about to hand over to Carly who will take questions from the audience. But thank you very much for your generosity in talking to us tonight, sharing your visions, sharing your dream, and I hope that the audience here will share with you, and participate in helping you to achieve this incredibly necessary action right now in the time of COVID, to help musicians all over the world. You are a great humanitarian, you are a great friend. Thank you very much. And now over to Carly, who will take questions from the audience. Thank you Maxim.

- Thank you very much. You've been great, great to talk to you. Thank you.

- Thank you Allan. Hi Maxim.

- Hi Carly.

Q&A and Comments:

Q: So I wanted to start off, obviously having been coming up on your 40th anniversary, I'm not sure there would be much left on your bucket list, but you know, what do you look to over the next, the next 40 years, and where is it that you really dream of of performing?

A: I think my next, no I look at the short term goal today. This COVID 19 really sparked so, so many, as I talked about already, this crisis created grounds for, to create platforms, as many as possible, to help mentors, musicians, also to create a different model perhaps for, to democratise access to music learning. So this is, you know, my passion lies in education. This, I know that if you had great teachers, if they were able to inspire you, you'll be inspired yourself, and you can give so many, so much back to people. So music is about giving, and when you are young, all you need is to have great teachers that will give you that, will plant this seed, and then later you'll be able to give much more to the society.

So this is, you know, education is my heart and soul. In the short term, and I would say also in the long term, because, you know, I'll keep on playing, and I'll keep on conducting, but teaching is endless, you know, the horizons, and there is a is endless grounds to create. There is so much talent in every continent, in every nation. And today the online platforms, and what the internet gives us enormous possibilities to create, and to create more talents to give the chances to all.

Q: Thank you. So you told us at the beginning that your father played the oboe. What made you choose the violin?

A: The violin, you know, was very simple. I was brought by my father to the orchestral rehearsals. And I sat very often in the first row, and wanted to find my dad in the, but you know, the oboes, they sit in the woodwind section, so you can't see them from the audience. So the only thing I saw is a conductor and violinists, you know, the first leader. So I thought, you know, yeah, I wanted to be the boss.

So I came up to the conductor and said, I want to become like you, I want to conduct the orchestra. And he said to me, look, can you learn oboe so I can fire your dad? So I, but I became a violinist because I needed to start some instrument. So, but my initial thought was to become conductor, like my mother also, because she was a choir conductor.

Q: So do your girls still play, and do they hope to follow in in your footsteps?

A: Yes. My girls, they enjoy, what is most important thing is that they enjoy every second of music. I want to give them every incentive to love music. So starting from teachers, and of course music is the worst discipline that you have to start so early in your life, yet you can have so much fun with it. And with the right guidance you can excel. If you have talent, you can excel very, very quickly. But one, the parents need to be very careful in observing, if kids are talented musically, or music is for their own pleasure, and just for their own education, all rounded education. Because music, you don't have to become necessarily only musician.

It doesn't have to be parents' goal, so their kids become musicians, they choose profession. So I think what is important is that the first of all, they enjoy the process of being in music, and then music will somehow influence their whole life. And that's why I think it's very important that in every school there's music going on. And I wouldn't call it, it should be compulsory, but I think it's wonderful for kids to play an instrument, because it's both entertaining. You're physical with that, you're playing an instrument, and you can enhance your auditory experience. You develop all your senses, visual, tactile, and you have fun.

Q: I'm sure it's difficult for parents to remain objective, but that does sound like good advice. So talking of musicians of the future, and I know how passionate you are about education and about mentorship. Who are the musicians that you have your eye on at the moment?

A: It's very, very hard question you just asked me. But there are a lot of great talents when we talk about the young musicians, there are a few stages. You know, I was on the jury of many competitions, both seniors and also juniors. And curiously enough, you find more talents sometimes in the junior competitions because you can see all these kids, they play with their hearts open. Now, after they're 16, something happens. And I remember myself when I immigrated to Israel, I started all of a sudden asking myself questions, you know, would I like to be continue a musician?

And I'd like to point out here I had, I was asking myself, I was doubting whether I was going to become a musician after winning a very important competition, Carl Flesch competition in London. Still, I was not sure whether the music is for me, whether I am good enough, whether I have enough drive, enough stamina to become a soloist. And then I had to reconnect with that, with the music and this passion again, with music. Was, I united with music not because my teachers taught me how to be in love with music, but music then became mine. So I think the greatest initiative of teacher, and the greatest goal for them is not only to teach a child crafts, but also to develop the musical soul of the child and to make it more sensitive, to shape it. And so the child is always stays inspired.

And I know it's easier said than done because again, music is a worse discipline. You have to play scales, and it's not always exciting to do them and all the attitudes, yet you can always find ways how to interest a child and how to stimulate the interest. And that is, so I would say, you know, I have three jobs, being violinist, conductor, and the teacher, and the teacher in me, I

think is, I regard this profession as the most responsible. I have the responsibility because it's not only about me when I play, but it's about that person that is in front of me.

Q: So in addition to those three professions, you are now adding fundraiser and you know, you are trying to start a movement, you know, to democratise music, to change the way people engage, and really have it reach audiences regardless of race, religion, background, is really quite a goal. How do you hope to manage your time and still be able to perform, and to teach, and be as dedicated as you have been?

A: You know, when there is a will, there is a way. I dedicate a lot of time, especially now during this times, unprecedented times, I also have a lot of time to think about these things and to devote myself, you know, we have a wonderful team that we work with and we are working towards that goal to help these wonderful mentors from different categories, violin, piano, cello, voice, female and male voice, and brass, and woodwinds. So we'd like to bring the awareness to the public that these are greatest mentors and also it will have a lot of discoveries.

Not only because, you know, people will recognise these great mentors, but they will have also, we can make discoveries about the students that they're going to teach. And this is wonderful. So I dedicate a lot of time to that. And when I come back playing, when the time will permit, when the situation will permit, I think I will carry on and my great team will do everything to support that. And we do hope that we'll have a lot of supporters from the audience.

- Thank you, Maxim. I'm now going to hand back over to Wendy.

- Maxim, Allan, thank you for a very special presentation. What a joy to see you perform together with your two beautiful and very talented daughters. Absolutely incredible. Really, truly amazing. It's wonderful and actually unbelievable it would come full circle from that award-winning ceremony all those years ago. I remember it so well as though it was yesterday. Maxim, your legendary status is well earned and clear for all of us to see. Your passion for music 40 years after you first took the stage is inspiring.

And as you say, music is happiness, and playing without words is magic. And today you gave us all that gift. Allan, thank you for today's fabulous guest and for your enriching interviewing. Thank you both for allowing all of us the honour of being part of this incredible discussion. It's a great privilege and a gift to be in a position to give back to the community. And I, and I'm sure others on this Zoom call would like to know more about supporting your initiative. Thank you to everybody for joining us this afternoon. And what I'd like to say is, thank you. Good afternoon and good night.

- Thank you very much, Wendy. Thank you Allan.

- [Wendy] Thank you. It was wonderful.

- [Maxim] The audiences. Thank you. Thank you.