



# Creating goodwill

After his first public concert, aged five, Maxim Vengerov took out his big map of the world and stuck a pin in every place he wanted to go and play the violin. “I wanted to go everywhere, anywhere. And now, year-by-year, this dream is coming true.” One of the pins may have landed in China. But at that time, when he was growing up in Soviet Novosibirsk, China had been starved of western classical music for years. Culture from the West had been driven underground.

Now Vengerov is waiting to take off from Beijing airport. It is the morning after a rapturous, even raucous reception for his performance of Beethoven at the seven-year-old Beijing Music Festival. A special experience for an artist who believes passionately in the power of music

to speak across cultures and to unite. “I play for people with different backgrounds, different nationalities, different religions. And the greatest thing that I notice now in our turbulent times, with so much polarization between people, is that once I’m on stage every concert hall becomes like a temple of art. The music sends a message of unity, friendship and love.”

It is not just a message for the concert halls. As a UNICEF goodwill ambassador, Vengerov has played for abducted child soldiers in Uganda, disadvantaged children in Harlem, drug-addicted Thai youngsters and children from across the ethnic divides of the Balkans.

He captivated the damaged children gathered around him in a remote

corner of Uganda with one of his favorite encores. It’s pure musical slapstick as he narrates the traditional children’s story of Ferdinand the Bull, with his violin and its incredible expressive range as his only prop. On this tour the same piece will bring the house down at one of music’s most storied venues, Suntory Hall in Tokyo. “Music is like a working Esperanto, everyone understands. It’s fascinating that with music you can send a message and everyone understands it without translation.”

As with most lasting children’s fables, beyond the comedy lies a parable. The story of Ferdinand, written in 1936, is the story of a bull who steadfastly refuses to fight in the bullrings of Madrid. When he performed Ferdinand for the first





time with an orchestra, at the Verbier Festival in summer 2004, it followed an anguished rendition of Benjamin Britten's threnodic Violin Concerto. Written in 1938, Britten composed it as a memorial to those who gave their lives fighting Franco in the Spanish Civil War, a conflict that confirmed what was to become a lifelong pacifism.

Idealistic it maybe, but Vengerov sees music as more relevant than ever in times of uncertainty and conflict. "During these difficult times, I think music is this fantastic alternative to everything we see. Music is healing, it's a proven fact that it speaks directly and positively to the subconscious. Today, music can play a bigger role than ever. It's not a luxury anymore."

Night after night Vengerov delivers that message. His extrovert stage presence engages an audience as few others can. But doesn't that continual baring of emotions, "naked on stage" as he puts it, exact a price? At the top of his profession at the age of thirty, recognized as one of today's truly great violinists, could such a gift become a liability, raising the specter of burn-out which has haunted so many child prodigies?

"As long as I'm not falling into routine, as long as it never becomes just work, I can't lose interest in what I do. And that's why I always go and study. It's like a body-builder. If he stops pumping the

muscles they run to fat." This thirst for learning has already taken in "not only the classical violin but baroque violin, the viola, two and a half years studying conducting." 2005 will be a sabbatical year. "Now I feel I have to take a little more distance and become a student again, and to dedicate time to other things: for instance to learn jazz violin, speak more languages, dance tango. I want always to develop myself, because once you say that you're happy with yourself, you reach a limit and the moment has gone. That's it, you're no longer enjoying what you're doing."

His quest for new things and his eclecticism seem to match a nomadic, maybe restless nature. Even his fingers never stop moving, fingering the soundtrack that is playing only in his head. Avowedly of no fixed abode, his life till 2008 is typed up on three sheets of A4, today's version of the big world map. The fixed points in the globe-trotting existence are his close family ties and his commitment to working with young people.

He has been teaching at the Musikhochschule des Saarlandes in Germany for four years. "It brings me enormous satisfaction because it's not just teaching music, but sometimes philosophy, even psychology. Sometimes lessons are not about music, but about the person

that is standing there in front of you."

"I feel very fortunate because from a very early age I was helped by many people, first of all my parents and grandparents. My mother was so busy as choirmistress in a local school working with 500 kids but then she always came home after an exhausting day and gave me the time to help me develop myself, learning with me. I've always been surrounded by people who've influenced me and helped my talent. My teachers, then help from great conductors like Daniel Barenboim and Slava Rostropovich who I could call my musical father. Then there came a point when I decided to pass on my knowledge. I started teaching when I was 26 years of age, and my first student was 27."

"If I had the opportunity and means I would implement music in every school. Children absorb like sponges, but if you don't keep them busy they will be on the street. That I learned from my mother who rescued kids from the street and taught them music."

Vengerov is touring Asia with the UBS Verbier Festival Orchestra under the baton of Charles Dutoit. The orchestra is made up of young musicians between the ages of 17 and 29, drawn from more than

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thirty countries from all over the world. Touring and playing with a young orchestra is a unique experience even for seasoned professionals. Performances are vibrant and even travel is an adventure again – the fuselage is about to erupt into the mother of all pillow fights.

“When I heard of the new orchestra I found it a brilliant idea. As a young musician, it’s the best schooling you can get – there’s nothing better. You come to Verbier, you have all these people training you, you play with the greatest conductors: Levine, Dutoit, Gergiev, to name only a few. Then you go on tour. As a kid what more could you dream of. You can take all this knowledge and become an incredible professional. But not only that, you will never forget this experience. This project has wisdom.”

The relationship between the corporate and artistic worlds is today financially necessary, but not always accompanied by a meeting of minds. Vengerov has a clear view of how firms should support the arts: “Invest in children and education. Then we will get the payback twenty years later. Humans need beauty. It’s not like water – if we don’t drink we die. But if we don’t relate ourselves to beauty we die emotionally. And unfortunately humans are built to survive the moment. We have to learn to look for the long-term, think for tomorrow.”

One of the young violinists in the orchestra grew up in Novosibirsk. In her words: “Maxim was the big hero for us. He’s why so many of us took up the violin. To be playing with him is a dream come true, unforgettable.”

Benjamin Britten famously found, “It is cruel, you know, that music should be so beautiful.” His Violin Concerto is widely thought to have found its definitive interpreter in Maxim Vengerov, who recorded it together with his mentor and Britten’s close friend Rostropovich. But notwithstanding his unparalleled ability to transmit the sorrowful side of music, he radiates a profoundly optimistic view of the power and relevance of its beauty. “Music is the most powerful instrument we have to enhance our humanity.”

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Our partnerships should tell the world what we believe in and what we stand for. They also need to have widespread appeal and reflect the passions of our clients. Globally, we currently focus our sponsorships on the America’s Cup champion Team Alinghi, on the sport of golf and world-class orchestral music.

Our sponsorship of Alinghi embraces all aspects of the team as it prepares to defend the America’s Cup in 2007. Our commitment to golf mixes partnerships with top tournaments such as THE PLAYERS Championship and the Evian Masters with extensive client-player experiences.

In the field of orchestral music, we have partnerships with several leading orchestras around the world, including the Boston Symphony Orchestra and the London Symphony Orchestra.

The UBS Verbier Festival Orchestra, which we co-founded five years ago, has achieved an outstanding international reputation for quality, vitality and commitment. The orchestra numbers over 100 musicians aged 17 to 29 from some 35 countries. Its Conductor Laureate is James Levine, Artistic Director of the Metropolitan Opera, New York and Music Director of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. The orchestra is resident at the annual Verbier Festival & Academy and tours internationally every autumn. It is managed by the Fondation de l’Orchestre de Verbier, which endeavors to promote cultural, artistic and musical excellence through its support of young musicians. Maxim Vengerov has performed with the orchestra a number of times.

UBS also has a longstanding commitment to contemporary art. Our UBS Art Collection focuses on works of museum quality that represent the defining European and American contemporary art trends from the second half of the twentieth century.