He conversed with Schoenberg and Rachmaninoff, played side-by-side with Heifetz, and—as a child—conducted at the invitation of Toscanini. He could be intimidating at the podium; his intense gaze and furrowed brow recalled the venerable maestri of ages past. His technique was a study in efficiency...his fees were among the highest in the industry... and his artistic vision was non-negotiable. Yet Lorin Maazel described himself as a “happy-go-lucky guy.”
AB: Indeed, those who knew the softer side of the man might be quick to recall his dedication to his seven children and his generosity as a teacher. The numerous opportunities for young musicians created through his Châteauville Foundation and the Maazel-Vilar conducting competition might also be mentioned, as well as the dozens of pro-bono concerts he gave that raised millions for causes ranging from UNESCO to the Beethoven Fund for Deaf Children.

Whatever one's personal perception of the man might be, it is a simple fact that the musical life of Lorin Maazel, from child prodigy...to violinist...composer, and administrator, was...extraordinary.

This is Alec Baldwin. It’s my pleasure to have your company as we now honor the memory Lorin Maazel, who passed away at age 84 in July, 2014. Our time over the next couple of hours will focus, in particular, on Mr. Maazel’s seven-decade relationship with the New York Philharmonic—an orchestra he conducted 619 times between 1942 and 2013. Listen with us, now, as Lorin Maazel conducts...The New York Philharmonic This Week.
Our story begins in the suburbs of Paris on March 6, 1930, when Lorin Varencove Maazel was born to Jewish-American parents, who were studying music at the Sorbonne. Maazel’s musical lineage can be traced back to his grandfather, Isaac, who played in the violin section of the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra. Though a pharmacist by trade, his mother, “Marie,” was an able pianist and later went on to found the Pittsburgh Youth Symphony. His father, Lincoln, was at different times a salesmen, a nightclub singer, a teacher, and an actor.

It was at least partly in pursuit of Lincoln’s Hollywood ambitions that the family returned to the United States a few years later and settled in Los Angeles. There, the young Lorin Maazel was found to have perfect pitch and he began piano studies at age five, followed by violin and conducting lessons two years later. Mr. Maazel discussed these early years in-depth with Mark Travis in 2009:

(ACTUALITY)
Maazel’s father persuaded Vladimir Bakaleinikoff to hear his child conduct. The seasoned musician was skeptical of the invitation, but upon hearing the boy, he was immediately struck by the youngster’s genius. When Bakaleinikoff accepted a position with the Pittsburgh Symphony as violist and associate conductor in the late 1930s, the Maazel family followed him there, settling in the Oakland neighborhood:

**(ACTUALITY)**

AB: Bakaleinikoff honed Maazel’s prodigious natural talent and the young maestro went on to lead just about every major American Orchestra between the ages of nine and fifteen—including the NBC Symphony at the personal invitation of Arturo Toscanini:

**(ACTUALITY)**
So it was that on August 5th, 1942, a 12 year old Lorin Maazel came to conduct the New York Philharmonic for the first time. The program featured Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony, The Suite from the *Nutcracker* by Tchaikovsky, and the Overture to the *Marriage of Figaro*. As one might imagine, the concert—which was given at Lewisohn Stadium—generated a great deal of publicity, but this was no gimmick. The gifted young conductor was very precise in his demands and he knew the music thoroughly. He recalled the event with Jon Tolansky in 1991:

Maazel was invited to a return engagement with the Philharmonic at Lewisohn Stadium in 1943 and again in 1944. Back in Pittsburgh (and when not “at play” leading world-class orchestras), he attended the Linden School and Peabody High School, graduating at the age of 16. By then, his tour as a conducting prodigy was over, as he explained:
Lorin Maazel enrolled at the University of Pittsburgh, where he studied languages, mathematics and philosophy. While many young students might work jobs in construction or retail to help pay for their studies, the teen-aged Maazel found a different solution:

(ACTUALITY)

AB: In 1951, Maazel went to Italy on a Fulbright Fellowship to further his studies. Two years later he made his European conducting début, stepping in for an ailing maestro at the Massimo Bellini Theatre in Catania, Italy. His reputation grew and in 1960, he became the first American to be invited to conduct at Bayreuth:

(ACTUALITY)

AB: Maazel’s success at Bayreuth resulted in an invitation to return there in 1968—this time to lead the complete Ring Cycle. In the meantime, Maazel’s star began to truly soar on a global scale. His performances were praised for their transparent textures and brilliant colors. His finely-tuned precision inspired virtuoso results from players and his encyclopedic knowledge of the repertoire and remarkable memory were nearly peerless.
1961 saw him earn the first of ten Grand Prix International du Disque awards for his recording of Ravel’s L’enfant et les sortileges. Decades later, he would bring the complete work to Avery Fisher Hall for the first time and he recalled learning it from Victor de Sabata:

(ACTUALITY/MUSIC CLIP)

AB: Lorin Maazel made his Metropolitan Opera debut in November, 1962 before crossing the plaza to make his subscription debut with the New York Philharmonic one month later. Then, as he had some two decades earlier, he led the Philharmonic in a performance of Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony:

(MUSIC: Beethoven V)

AB: That same concert also featured a performance of the Berg violin concerto with Christian Ferras as soloist. Here, Maazel not only demonstrated the breadth of his repertoire, but also the depth of his interpretive gifts—particularly in support of a soloist:

(MUSIC: Berg excerpt)
One week later, Maazel would again dazzle audiences at Philharmonic Hall—this time with a program of works by Mozart, Schumann and the Ravel orchestration of *Pictures at an Exhibition* by Mussorgsky:

(MUSIC: pictures excerpt)

Maazel became a fixture at Philharmonic concerts throughout the 1960s and 70s, during which time he led the orchestra in more than 100 performances.

He also continued to thrive and flourish elsewhere with posts at the Deutsche Oper Berlin, The Cleveland Orchestra, The Vienna State Opera, The Pittsburgh Symphony, and The Bavarian Radio Symphony. This was in addition to making numerous award-winning recordings and many guest appearances with the Berlin Philharmonic, La Scala, The Vienna Philharmonic, and elsewhere.

Then, in November, 2000, something extraordinary happened. Mr. Maazel returned to the podium at Avery Fisher Hall after a twenty-three year absence and was most surprised to be offered...a job:

(ACTUALITY)

(MUSIC: Wagner Ring synthesis)
Maazel conducted his first subscription program with the New York Philharmonic as its Music Director on September 19, 2002. The concert featured Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony with an all-star ensemble of soloists and it opened with *On the Transmigration of Souls* by John Adams—a Philharmonic Commission written to honor the victims of 9/11:

(MUSIC)

*On the Transmigration of Souls* won the Pulitzer Prize in Music and it also went on to win three Grammy Awards. The piece was just one of several World Premieres Mr. Maazel conducted during the course of his residency.

(MUSIC: Mozart)

In addition to being regarded as a world-class violinist and conductor, Lorin Maazel was also highly-regarded as a composer. And while the public didn’t hear much about this until later, composing was always something close to his heart:

(ACTUALITY)

(MUSIC for cello and orchestra)

In 2005, to mark Lorin Maazel’s 75th birthday, the New York Philharmonic decided to program an evening dedicated to Mr. Maazel’s music.
Several of his close friends were invited to participate in program, including Sir James Galway:

(ACTUALITY)

...and Jeremy Irons:

(ACTUALITY)

Perhaps nearest and dearest to Lorin Maazel’s heart, however, was the opportunity to perform with his wife, Dietlinde Turban-Maazel, who made her New York Philharmonic debut as the narrator in *The Giving Tree*—an adaptation of the Shel Silverstein story of the same name:

(ACTUALITY: Dietlinde)

(MUSIC: The Giving Tree)

Later, that same year, Mr. Maazel would see 1984—his one and only opera—given its premiere at Covent Garden in a production by Robert LePage. Based on the George Orwell classic, Mr. Maazel regarded the opera as a synthesis of his life’s work:

(ACTUALITY)
2006 would mark another first for Lorin Maazel and the New York Philharmonic when they joined with Universal Classics on a ground-breaking direct-to-download series of commercial releases. Dubbed “DG Concerts,” the idea was to do rapid releases of recently-performed live concerts. The idea was to preserve much of the concert experience for the listener while cutting out much of what makes the recording process prohibitive to a major orchestra.

The first of these releases featured Mr. Maazel conducting the last three symphonies of Mozart. Reception was overwhelmingly positive; the album reached number one on the iTunes classical charts and remained there for many weeks. Its popularity eventually situated it between Madonna and ColdPlay in all album categories:

(MUSIC: g-minor symphony: i)

Subsequent DG Concert releases included an all-Strauss recording and the Symphony No. 7 by Dvorak. Shorter showpieces were also featured, including Kodaly’s Dances of Galanta:

(MUSIC: Kodaly)
Beethoven, Brahms and Tchaikovsky were all the subjects of Philharmonic Festivals under Mr. Maazel. He also presided over special focus initiatives that explored the works of more modernist composers like Charles Ives, Elliott Carter and Luciano Berio...who he knew well:

He hired 19 new players to the orchestra and through performances of classics old and new, he cultivated his signature polished and glossy sound. Philharmonic Archivist Barbara Haws discussed the Maazel sound with Mark Travis:

As befits one who enjoyed so much success in the genre, Maazel also brought opera back to Avery Fisher Hall, notably Strauss’s Elektra and Puccini’s Tosca:

That performance of Tosca was part of an impressive three-week marathon that also saw Mr. Maazel lead performances of Mahler’s Symphony No. 9 and the Symphony No. 8 by Anton Bruckner. He smiled when asked if he’d require any special preparation for such an undertaking:
While the Philharmonic toured extensively throughout the United States and abroad with Maazel at the helm, no stop garnered so much attention as the concert they gave on February 26, 2008. An audience of millions watched on television as Mr. Maazel led an historic performance from the East Grand Theater in the North Korean capital city, Pyongyang. The concert featured Philharmonic staples like Gershwin’s *An American in Paris* and Dvorak’s *New World Symphony*:

...but it came to a most emotional conclusion with a performance of the folk song, Arirang:

By the time the 2008-2009 season was rolled out, it had already been announced that this would be Mr. Maazel’s final season as Music Director of the Philharmonic and that Alan Gilbert would be his successor. That season saw the orchestra gave a complete cycle of the Bach Brandenburg Concertos—a programming choice made to showcase the talents of many of the individual players in the orchestra, of whom Mr. Maazel had grown quite fond:
Lorin Maazel’ final season as Music Director also saw the completion of a Mahler Cycle. Mahler was, of course, a composer/conductor who had ALSO served as Music Director of the Philharmonic. As he explained, the music of Mahler was a constant in Maazel’s life, so this was a most fitting exit:

(MACTUALITY)

Maazel conducted the Adagio from Mahler’s unfinished 10th symphony early in the 2008/2009 season:

(MUSIC)

...and his final concerts as Music Director saw him lead the Symphony No. 8—“Symphony of a Thousand.”

(MUSIC)

Though he stepped down as Music Director of the New York Philharmonic, Lorin Maazel was in no way preparing for retirement. No, quite the contrary:

(MACTUALITY)

Dietlinde Turban also spoke of the Castleton Festival and its importance to her late husband:
Away from the Virginia homestead, Lorin Maazel enjoyed five seasons as the inaugural Music Director of Valencia’s Palau de les Arts Reina Sofia. This was in addition to several engagements as a guest-conductor all over the globe. 2012 saw him assume the role of Music Director of the Munich Philharmonic—a post he rescinded due to health concerns in June, 2014.

He did keep his promise to return to the Philharmonic and led four very well-received programs there between 2011 and 2013. He conducted the Philharmonic for the last time on January 26, 2013 in a program of works by Tchaikovsky, Lutoslawski, and the Symphony No. 5 by Shostakovich. Along with Sibelius, Shostakovich was a composer with whom Maazel experienced a transformation, having dismissed both men in his youth…so in a way this final concert supported Maazel’s philosophy of being a lifelong student:

(MUSIC)
After leading more than 200 orchestras in over 7000 concert and opera performances, Lorin Maazel passed away on his farm in Virginia on July 13, 2014. He was 84 years old. He is survived by his wife, Dietlinde, two ex-wives, seven children, and at least four grandchildren.

In addition to the stories and more than 300 recordings he leaves behind, Mr. Maazel’s legacy also lives on through the continuation of his Castleton Festival through which he intends that his craft remain “well defended” for many years to come.

(MUSIC UP AND OUT)

You can hear more of Mr. Maazel’s performances with the New York Philharmonic when you visit the Watch & Listen section of nyphil.org. We have curated a special exhibit of several of Mr. Maazel’s most memorable performances, which you can hear in their entirety. Much of this material is also available on the Philharmonic’s SoundCloud page. You can also learn more about his life and work at maestromaazel.com. We extend our very special thanks and heartfelt best wishes to Dietlinde and the Maazel family.