Script for NYP 19-29 “Pots-Pourris for $500, Alex”

(INSERT NATIONAL UNDERWRITING CREDIT #1)

(THEME MUSIC UP AND UNDER TO "X")

AB: And “this” week....(X)

(MUSIC EXAMPLE)

AB: Joseph Alessi is the soloist in the trombone concerto by Christopher Rouse. This is Alec Baldwin. Thanks very much for joining me on a broadcast that also features music from Wagner’s opera, Tannhauser, a suite from Kodaly’s opera, Háry János, and a fantasia by Tchaikovsky. Leonard Bernstein, Leonard Slatkin, Zubin Mehta, and Kurt Masur will all conduct...the New York Philharmonic This Week.

(MUSIC UP AND OUT)

AB: Háry János is a Hungarian folk opera in four acts by Zoltán Kodály. Premiered in 1926, the libretto is based on the comic epic, The Veteran by János Garay. Similar to Mozart’s The Magic Flute (and a lot of American musical theater for that matter), the plot unfolds with both music and spoken dialogue.
The story is set in the first half of the 19th century. Háry, a veteran of the Austrian army, sits in the village inn and regales any and all who will listen with his tall tales of fantastic exploits. These include winning the heart of Napoleon’s wife and then single-handedly conquering Napoleon and his armies in combat. But fame and riches only go so far. Háry renounces both for the simple village life and the love of his sweetheart.

According to Hungarian superstition, if a statement is followed by a sneeze by someone listening, that is regarded as confirmation of its truth. Therefore, both the opera and the popular suite from it that we’re about to hear begin with a “musical sneeze.”

So Gesundheit in advance as we now hear the Háry János Suite by Kodaly. Kurt Masur conducts the New York Philharmonic.

(MUSIC)
We just heard the Háry János suite by Zoltan Kodaly. The New York Philharmonic was conducted by Kurt Masur.

We next turn to the Trombone Concerto by Christopher Rouse.

There are several Philharmonic connections to this piece. First—it is dedicated to conductor laureate Leonard Bernstein, who died less than a year before it was completed. Second—it was commissioned by the Philharmonic and premiered by the orchestra’s long-time principal trombone, Joseph Alessi. And finally, the composer, Christopher Rouse, would later become the Philharmonic’s Marie-Josee Kravis Composer-in-Residence for three seasons.

The third movement, in particular, bows it head to Bernstein by quoting a theme from the Kaddish Symphony. Here’s the composer to tell us a little more:

Principal trombone Joseph Alessi shared this story too:
AB: Leonard Slatkin conducted Joseph Alessi and the New York Philharmonic in the premiere of this piece on December 30, 1992, in Avery Fisher Hall. And that’s the performance we hear now. Concerto for trombone and orchestra by Christopher Rouse. Joseph Alessi is the soloist and Leonard Slatkin conducts...the New York Philharmonic.

(MUSIC)

AB: We just heard the Concerto for Trombone & Orchestra by Christopher Rouse. The New York Philharmonic was conducted by Leonard Slatkin. As soloist, we heard principal trombone Joseph Alessi.

(SLIGHT PAUSE)

AB: Our broadcast will continue shortly with works by Tchaikovsky and Wagner. I’m Alec Baldwin and you’re listening to the New York Philharmonic This Week.

(ID)
Tchaikovsky’s frequent preoccupation with illicit love takes us on a journey into Dante’s Inferno with the next work on our program.

Described as a “fantasia” for orchestra, Francesca da Rimini recounts the dark tale of the eponymous character’s adulterous liaison with her husband’s brother. At the beginning of the piece, the music reminds us to “Abandon all hope” as we enter. This is followed by a plaintive, sighing melody from Francesca, which swells into full-blown passion. That passion is cut short by a double murder. In the end, you’ll want to listen for Tchaikovsky’s orchestral howling. This graphically depicts the lovers in the afterlife, condemned to quote “be continually tormented by the cruelest winds under a dark and gloomy air” in the second circle of hell.

Here now is Francesca da Rimini by Tchaikovsky. Leonard Bernstein conducts...the New York Philharmonic.

(MUSIC)
AB: We just heard Tchaikovsky’s fantasia for orchestra, Francesca da Rimini. The New York Philharmonic was conducted by Leonard Bernstein.

(SLIGHT PAUSE)

AB: We continue with music that straddles both the sacred and the profane with the final piece on our program. We’re going to listen to the Prelude and Venusberg Music from Tannhauser by Richard Wagner.
AB: The opera takes its plot from the medieval legend of the troubadour Tannhäuser, who strayed into the kingdom of the goddess Venus and became her lover. Once his base appetites are satisfied, Tannhäuser returns to the mortal realm, but feels such shame that he makes a pilgrimage to Rome to seek absolution from the Pope. The Pontiff tells Tannhäuser that he has no more chance of salvation than the Pope's staff has of blooming flowers. Well...that's just what happens. BUT...because this is opera—it doesn't happen until Tannhäuser makes his exit. So he instead returns to Venus, with whom he will remain—not quite happily ever after, but only until his final damnation.

Now while the plot and form of the opera are considered problematic to some, most everyone would agree that the Prelude is nothing short of a masterpiece.

Here it is now. Zubin Mehta conducts...the New York Philharmonic.
We just heard the Prelude and Venusberg Music from the opera, Tannhauser by Richard Wagner. The New York Philharmonic was conducted by Zubin Mehta.

Music Director Jaap van Zweden conducts works by Beethoven, Debussy, and Stravinsky next time, on the New York Philharmonic This Week.

This is Alec Baldwin. Please join me as we hear Debussy’s evocative tone poem, La Mer, Stravinsky’s savage Rite of Spring, and Beethoven’s masterful Seventh Symphony. Jaap van Zweden will conduct…the New York Philharmonic This Week.