



The New York Philharmonic stages two concerts at the National Center for the Performing Arts in Beijing over March 8-9, under the baton of its new music director Jaap van Zweden (left). Japanese-American concert violinist Ryu Goto (middle) also plays in them. PHOTOS BY WANG XIAOJING / FOR CHINA DAILY

SERVING THE ORCHESTRA

Dutch conductor Jaap van Zweden leads the New York Philharmonic in a set of performances in Beijing. **Chen Nan** reports.

Jaap van Zweden can still recall how he saved extra cash to buy New York Philharmonic tickets when he was studying at the Juilliard School in the United States.

Now, four decades later, Van Zweden, a 57-year-old Dutch conductor, will become the next music director of the New York Philharmonic starting with the 2018-19 season.

Over March 8-9, along with the orchestra, he performed at the National Center for the Performing Arts in Beijing.

The two concerts, featuring Chinese pianist Wang Yujia and Japanese-American concert violinist Ryu Goto, showcased a diverse repertoire, including Johannes Brahms' Piano Concerto No. 1 in D minor, Op. 15; Felix Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto in E minor, Op. 64; Gustav Mahler's Symphony No. 5 in C-sharp minor and Igor Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*.

Speaking about the New York Philharmonic, Van Zweden says: "As an institution and an orchestra, I think it is one of the most famous and best in the world."

"And I am very happy that even before I officially start on Sept 20 as the music director, I can already present the orchestra and myself on this wonderful tour."

The 31-year-old Wang joined

Van Zweden's inaugural tour in 2017 and he says "Wang is one of the really fine pianists at the moment".

As for the 29-year-old violinist Goto, whom the conductor performed with for the first time, Van Zweden says "the violinist is very new, and we are always happy and open to meeting new talents, and starting new relationships".

As for his new role, Van Zweden says: "When you look at the history of conductors who have worked with the 176-year-old orchestra, such as Gustav Mahler, Arturo Toscanini and Pierre Boulez, I am stepping into very big shoes. The orchestra has a history and carries the DNA of all those great conductors. The only feeling I have is to be proud and humble. I just serve the music and the orchestra with 100 percent of what I can do."

"We are creating a conversation, which mixes my tradition and their tradition. It's about giving and taking. They bring something which they want, and what they have been playing for a very long time, and I will leave it alone and I just enjoy it," he says.

"The rehearsals are even more interesting than the concerts. We are learning and enjoying each other very much."

Giving an example of the "mixing" when interpreting



Chinese pianist Wang Yujia also performs with the New York Philharmonic in Beijing.

Mahler's iconic piece, Symphony No. 5, he says: "Imagine you are looking at a painting on the wall."

"If Mahler is the painter, he would grab you by the throat and pull you into the painting."

"So, you would become part of the painting."

"His (Mahler's) music is full of roller-coaster emotions. So, I let the orchestra be free to interpret the music but at the same time I control the emotion. It's a very thin line."

The New York Philharmonic first performed at the NCPA in 2008. During the past 10 years, the orchestra has performed in Shanghai almost every year.

As a conductor, Van Zweden has been a frequent visitor to Beijing. His most recent per-

formance in Beijing was when he took the baton and led the Hong Kong Philharmonic to perform *Die Walkure*, one section of *The Ring Cycle*, also known as *Ring of the Nibelung* by Richard Wagner, based on the original version performed in 1967 at the first Salzburg Easter Festival by conductor Herbert von Karajan (1908-89).

Speaking about his recent shows in the Chinese capital, he says: "I feel at home in Beijing. The (recent) shows were a wonderful experience with the warm and knowledgeable audiences."

Van Zweden, who was born in Amsterdam, received his first violin lessons at age 5.

He moved to New York to

study at the Juilliard School at 15, and at 19, he was the youngest to be appointed as concert master of the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra in Amsterdam.

His talent as a conductor was discovered by American composer and conductor Leonard Bernstein, who was guest-conducting the Concertgebouw Orchestra in Berlin.

In 1997, Van Zweden became a full-time conductor.

Over the last decade, Van Zweden has become a conductor on three continents.

In 2012, he was appointed music director of the Hong Kong Philharmonic, and he now heads one of the largest and busiest music organizations in Hong Kong, presenting more than 150 concerts every year.

Under Van Zweden, the Hong Kong Philharmonic has a variety of initiatives, including a four-year project to perform and record Wagner's complete *Ring of the Nibelung*.

The performances recorded live for the classical music label, Naxos, have won positive reviews internationally.

This year also marks a major milestone for Van Zweden as he completes his 10-year tenure as music director of the Dallas Symphony Orchestra.

Contact the writer at chennan@chinadaily.com.cn

PEOPLE IN A NEW ERA

Embroidery helps women stitch a future

By YANG JUN
yangjun@chinadaily.com.cn

In 2010, Guangzhou's gross domestic product hit a record 1,000 trillion yuan (\$160 trillion), putting it in third place among cities on the Chinese mainland, following Shanghai and Beijing.

That year, Wei Zuying, a migrant worker, left Guangzhou. By then, she and her husband had worked far from home — a small Miao village in Guizhou province, in Southwest China — for 10 years. In that period, they got the chance to see their families only once or twice a year.

"It was sad that our son and our parents were left at home without my husband and me around," says Wei, 38, whose son is now 13 and daughter is 6. "But it was not only us. Everyone in my village had left their children and parents behind."

This situation prompted Wei to return home where she started an embroidery clothing factory and shared her experience of running the factory with local people.

The embroidery business led by Wei helped raise incomes and made it possible for women in the town to work near home.

When Wei started the factory, it was not easy. Then, she and her elder sister, Wei Peibei, managed to cobble up 200,000 yuan for the initial investment. And they spent half of the money on buying one machine.

A year later, they had made a profit of around 80,000 yuan. But, from then on, the factory grew rapidly.

Wei's factory now has six machines and some 10 employees, making an annual profit of 400,000 yuan. The goods produced by the factory include embroidered items, shoes and bags.

Initially, they got orders mainly from the neighboring Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region. But as business grew, her sister started her own factory in 2012.

Speaking about her journey, her sister Wei Peibei, who also has two children, says: "My family now has a house, and we bought a new car a few years ago."

"Now it is convenient for me to take care of my children and the elderly, since I don't need to leave home for work."

As of now, the town has 32 small embroidery factories producing goods worth some 6 million yuan each



Wei Zuying has become a deputy to the 13th National People's Congress in Beijing.

PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

year. The town's per capita income today is about 10 times that of five years ago.

The progress can be traced back to Wei Zuying. Speaking about her success, Wei says innovation is key.

It started with Wei embroidering a template piece manually. Then, her husband put in the data of the pattern into the computer. Later, the machine read the data and stitched the embroidery according to the template.

Wei learned about this technology when she worked at a clothing factory in Guangzhou. It usually takes a woman about half a month to complete an embroidery piece which is about 30 centimeters long and 4 centimeters wide, says Wei. Such a work is worth about 2,000 yuan.

Using machines significantly increases efficiency and saves time, she adds.

Wei, who learned to embroider at age 6, designs new templates every year where she tends to blend traditional Miao patterns with modern designs.

Earlier this month, as a new deputy to the 13th National People's Congress, Wei wore her new designs for the two sessions in Beijing. On the sleeves of the outfit are embroidered patterns with gold threads. The embroidery includes a lotus, trees, birds and butterflies.

Looking ahead, Wei says: "We need new designs every year so that people like our products."

Separately, Wei also hopes that her operation expands so that women in neighboring villages can join the embroidery business.

Zhang Boning contributed to the story.



I AM NOT MEDICINE

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