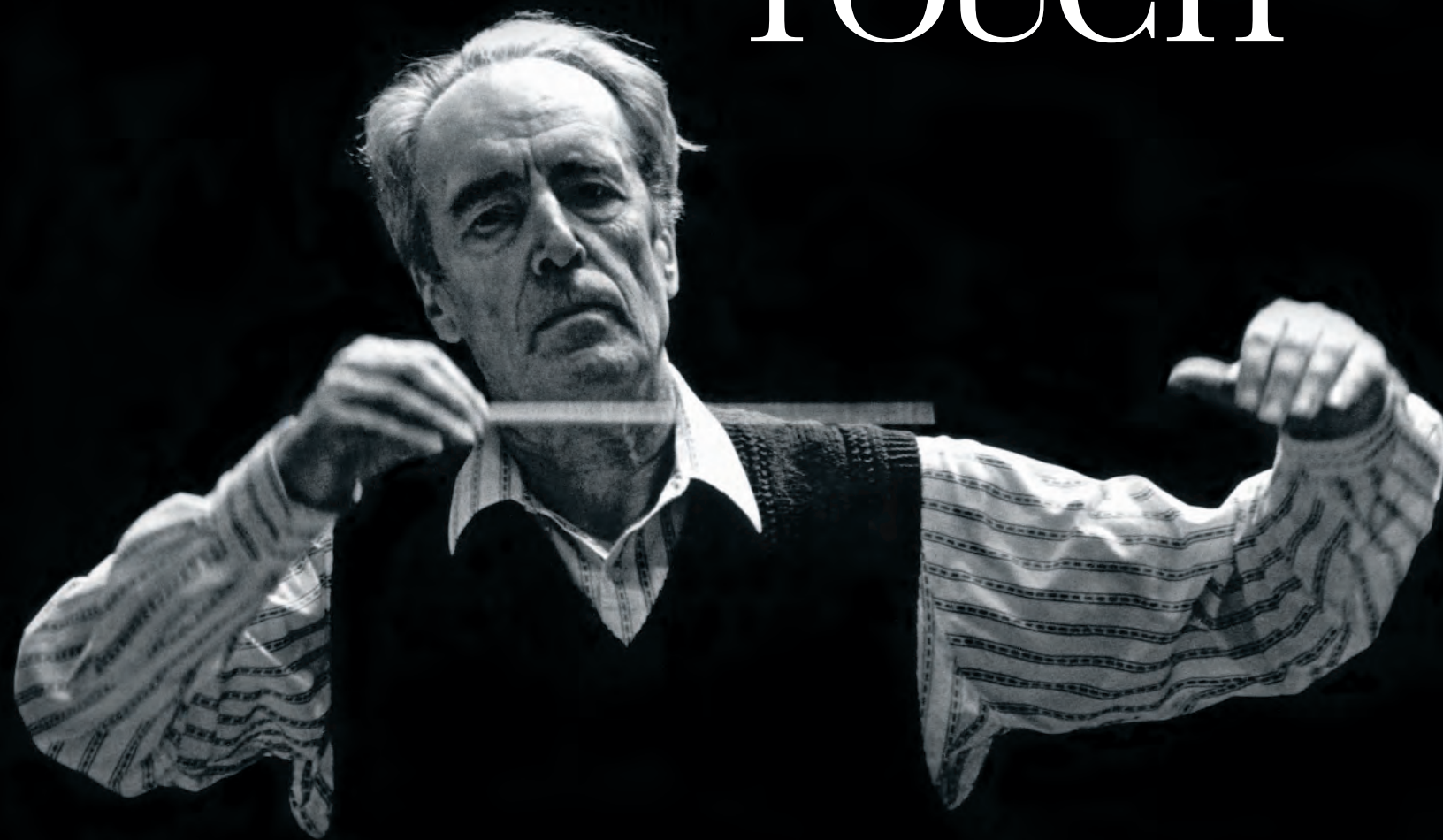


THE MUELLER TOUCH



AFTER 26 YEARS, CURTIS'S LEGENDARY MAESTRO REMAINS A TOWERING INFLUENCE.

Otto-Werner Mueller is an icon. More than a gifted maestro with a distinguished conducting career, he is widely regarded as the most important conducting pedagogue of the last 50 years. Maestro Mueller has spent more than half that time at Curtis, where he holds the Rita E. and Gustave M. Hauser Chair in Conducting Studies. Since joining the Curtis faculty in 1986, he has been an invaluable guide to young conductors; and “just as important,” asserts Curtis President Roberto Díaz, “are the many roles Maestro Mueller has played in the education of each and every instrumentalist at Curtis during



this time: theory instructor, music historian, and phrasing supervisor, just to name a few.” A Mueller rehearsal is a revelation, uncovering a world of intricate detail in well-known scores.

At Commencement last May, as Maestro Mueller retired from full-time teaching, Curtis awarded him an honorary doctorate. The tribute recognized his enormous influence on young musicians over a tenure of 26 years—and counting—as well as at other institutions including Yale, Juilliard, and the University of Wisconsin. Congratulations flowed in, including this student reminiscence from the appreciative president of a certain New York conservatory: “I believe that I was the first person you corrected from the podium at the beginning of your tenure at Yale,” wrote Joseph W. Polisi in a letter to the honoree. “You were upset that I was playing too loudly at the upbeat to the second measure of the Shostakovich First Symphony. I understood when you said, ‘We know what a bassoon sounds like.’” Current and graduating students likewise shared their memories and impersonations of their beloved teacher and guide. *Overtones* offers its own tribute to Maestro Mueller here.

“The worst insult a conductor can give the orchestra is to not be well prepared. A conductor must know every line and see the whole phrase, like the curve on a building. He must know what’s just ahead and where you are going, and communicate: eye contact is the most important thing.”



Otto-Werner Mueller in *Overtones*, 2002





“Mr. Mueller instilled in each of us the utmost respect for the composer’s intentions, and made certain that we placed the importance of the score before our own passing musical whims. He opened our ears to a new level of detail, and insisted upon a devout care for every note, in both quality of sound and in its contextual placement. In my years since graduating from Curtis, I am discovering how rare these elements of music-making can be, and I am all the more grateful to have been part of such a privileged, but more importantly honest, community of music-making.”

—Elena Urioste (Violin '08)

“My days at the Curtis Institute of Music were a turning point in my life. Up until age 19, I lived in Peru, and knew very little about the music that I now love and perform. Otto-Werner Mueller changed that. As my teacher, he was very clear to point out what I didn’t know—and then he encouraged and taught me throughout my time as his student not only how to learn, but also how to enjoy the process of learning. He always said: ‘If you don’t know something, say that you don’t know it, and find the answer.’ This advice has stayed with me ever since and informs how I work and live every day.”

—Miguel Harth-Bedoya (Conducting '91), music director, Fort Worth Symphony



“In my first informal reading with Maestro Mueller, Brahms’s First Symphony was slated to be the vehicle that would indoctrinate all of us newbies into the Curtis Symphony Orchestra. As I think back, we must have all looked like frantic puppies—wary of the maestro’s wrath, but extremely eager to please. As is the typical Mueller way, our introduction to the work didn’t begin with a runthrough of the first movement. In fact, we didn’t even start at the beginning. Maestro Mueller dissected the symphony in agonizingly minute detail, highlighting figures in the winds, connecting lines between each string section, and jumping between movements to point out motives planted in the symphony’s skeleton. ... In the end, this microscopic work allowed us to put all the pieces back together to make it more beautiful and more profound than ever before.”

—Benjamin Beilman (Violin '12)

“Otto Werner Mueller remains one of the most important influences I have had in my musical development. My years studying with him were crucial and I literally think about things he taught me every day. Thank you, Mr. Mueller, for all you gave to me and all your other students, and for what you stand for as a musician and human being.”

—Alan Gilbert (Conducting '92), music director, New York Philharmonic

Opposite page top: Maestro Mueller with his wife, Virginia Allen, at Wednesday Tea. PHOTO: PETE CHECCHIA

Opposite page middle: Maestro Mueller conducts the Curtis Symphony Orchestra in 1994. PHOTO: JEAN BRUBAKER

Opposite page bottom: Maestro Mueller received a hearty standing ovation at Curtis’s Commencement in May. PHOTO: DAVID SWANSON

Above top: Maestro Mueller chats with Robert Spano (Conducting '85) following a Curtis Symphony Orchestra rehearsal. PHOTO: CANDACE DICARLO

Above middle: Maestro Mueller in a Lab Orchestra rehearsal

Right: Maestro Mueller and pianist Leon Fleisher after a Curtis Symphony Orchestra performance in 2003. PHOTO: PETE CHECCHIA

More Online

Share your memories of Maestro Mueller on the Curtis Facebook page

www.facebook.com/CurtisInstitute

