

Indian conductor leads concert in NY to raise funds for Pak's flood victims



By Ajay Ghosh

New York: Singapore-born Indian conductor George Mathew organized and led Beethoven for the Indus Valley, a benefit concert of Beethoven's monumental Ninth Symphony in New York, which helped raise funds for the people of Pakistan affected by the devastating floods of 2010. Presented by Music for Life International Inc., and the American Pakistan Foundation, the much publicized concert was held on January 31 in the City's prestigious Carnegie Hall's Stern Auditorium/Perelman Stage.

The concert was an urgent call to the global community to move as swiftly as possible to give resources and support the flood victims, Brittnee Walker, assistant publicist, Cohn Dutcher Associates, told India Tribune. Dr. Nafis Sadik, chairperson of the American Pakistan Foundation and Jacqueline Novogratz, founder and CEO of Acumen Fund, offered special opening remarks at the beginning of the concert.

"Beethoven himself makes a musical statement in the Finale of the Ninth Symphony that goes to the heart of our mission with this concert," George Mathew said, while describing the concert. "Writing in an earlier era of tension between the East and the West, Beethoven uses the music of the Turkish military, music of the Islamic world, to provide stability and indeed possibility for the German (western) setting of the famous Ode to Joy tune. In that moment, Beethoven seems to become the voice of a whole

civilization in that rare moment of embrace of another civilization. It seems that Beethoven is suggesting that embracing the spirit of the other, engaging the culture of the other is probably a more interesting form of interaction than rejecting the other, or being afraid of it, or declaring war on it or deporting it. Two-hundred years later, it appears we have still much to learn from this great wise man of music and the world.”

Mathew noted, “In gathering together as a community of musicians, listeners and supporters, we send a message of solidarity and human support to our fellow human beings in Pakistan, who have been so hard hit by these devastating floods in addition to whatever financial support we muster.”

The concert brought together many of the world’s finest orchestral musicians. Principal artists from the New York Philharmonic, MET Orchestra, The Philadelphia Orchestra, The Emerson Quartet, Orchestra of St. Luke’s, Brooklyn Philharmonic, Youth Orchestra of the Americas, Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, students and faculty of The Juilliard School, the Manhattan School of Music, and other major music schools and organizations all donated their time to the worthy cause. The distinguished Glenn Dicterow, Concertmaster of the New York Philharmonic, served as Concertmaster, and led a violin section made up of concertmasters of leading American and international orchestras.

A quartet of illustrious soloists joined the assembled forces headlined by MET Opera National Council Winner soprano Laquita Mitchell, mezzo-soprano Margaret Lattimore, tenor Sean Panikkar and bass Morris Robinson. They were joined by the renowned Dessoff Symphonic Choir, led by music director Christopher Shepard.

Beethoven for the Indus Valley was the fourth in a series of global humanitarian concerts that George Mathew had conceived and presented at Carnegie Hall, gathering together artists from the world’s finest orchestras, ensembles and music schools for humanitarian causes while employing the music itself as their central source of energy.