



**Letters: Musical Stars Gather  
to Benefit Earthquake Victims**

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**To the Editor:**

American media paid little attention to Monday night's Carnegie Hall performance of Beethoven's Symphony No. 9, a benefit for the victims of the Oct. 14 earthquake in South Asia. So, since I was fortunate enough to attend, I thought I'd take the liberty of submitting a few observations of my own. (BBC's World Service has broadcast a report to its affiliates in every place but North America.)

I make no claim to objectivity, as the generosity of those onstage, both in number and quality, was overwhelming. Yes, there are other stories -- Singaporean-born Indian conductor George Mathew creating a project to benefit many Pakistanis, is certainly one - - but I think the project says something important and wonderfully positive about the entire classical music community.

The brainchild of Mathew, "Beethoven's 9th for South Asia," as the event was titled, attracted heavily credentialed musicians from around the East Coast. Glenn Dicterow served as concertmaster, just as he does in the New York Philharmonic, with the Emerson String Quartet's Eugene Drucker in the second chair. The bass section featured such luminaries as Timothy Cobb, principal bass of the Metropolitan Orchestra, and Lawrence Wolfe, principal of the Boston Pops.

Amid these orchestral stars sat students and recent graduates of the Manhattan School of Music and The Juilliard School. Members of the Brentano, American and Volta string quartets and the Lyric Piano Quartet were also on hand. [For a full list of participating ensembles, see [press release](#).]

Justin Bischoff's choir of about 180 voices -- from choruses through the city -- was prepared beautifully. The soloists Amy Johnson, Kathryn Friest, Dinyar Vania and Charles Temkey were impassioned and more than up to the task of projecting over the stage filled with enthusiastic colleagues. Mathew was remarkable in guiding his virtuoso pickup orchestra through the occasional mishap and was most memorable at certain moments for staying out of the way as his pros had a good time playing.

Carnegie Hall's Clive Gillinson, the New York Philharmonic's Zarin Mehta, the Manhattan School's Robert Sirota were among music industry leaders who threw their support behind the project that sprang up in the course of eight weeks and aimed to raise \$500,000. While assembling far-flung forces to present a work of this magnitude on such short notice and with limited rehearsals is a risky business, Monday proved to be an inspired moment that demonstrated both the power and generosity of the classical music community when appropriately directed.

**John Gingrich**

*(The author is president of John Gingrich Management, Inc.)*

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