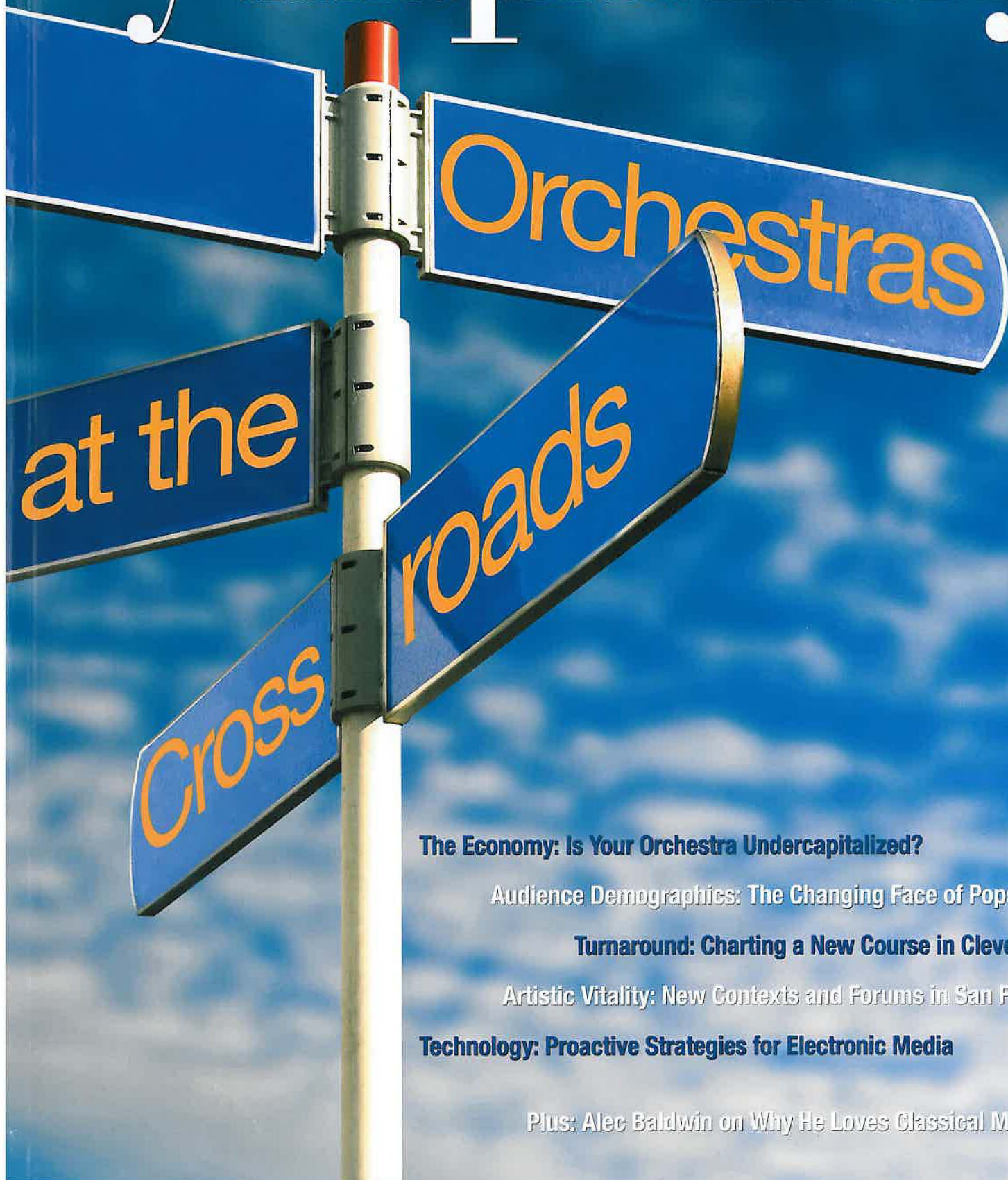


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# symphony

THE MAGAZINE OF THE LEAGUE OF AMERICAN ORCHESTRAS



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**Plus: Alec Baldwin on Why He Loves Classical Music**

# Radio Days

He's starred in a ton of important films. He's hosted the Oscars and *Saturday Night Live*. He's the star of a hit television comedy. So what's **Alec Baldwin**'s favorite new project? Being the radio "voice" of an orchestra.

In the fall of 2009, I was attending a performance by the Philadelphia Orchestra at Carnegie Hall. Christoph Eschenbach was the conductor. I had been invited by Clive Gillinson, Carnegie Hall's executive and artistic director, to sit in his box as part of a cultivation event for Carnegie patrons. I had attended events of every stripe there before, but never in the company of, as it turned out, some of the most significant management figures and benefactors in contemporary symphonic music.

Seated in the adjoining box were Matias Tarnopolsky, the New York Philharmonic's vice president of artistic planning, and Zarin Mehta, the president and executive director of the Phil. At the interval, a conversation ensued, and at the end of the concert I was asked to call Matias and Zarin about their idea that I step in to replace Kerry Frumkin, who was soon to be stepping down as the radio announcer for the New York Philharmonic.

Backstage, we met the imperious Eschenbach, who had no idea who I was. (I was liking this world already.) Eventually, after meeting with Zarin and Matias at Lincoln Center to discuss the parameters of the job, I agreed to become the announcer on classical radio station WQXR. It is one of the best decisions I have ever made.

Besides attending innumerable events at Avery Fisher Hall, Carnegie Hall, and other such venues, besides entering a world teeming with an abundance of true creative genius and incomparable artistic dedication, besides getting acquainted

with people like Charles Dutoit, Alan Gilbert, Neeme Järvi, Emanuel Ax, and Marin Alsop, to name but a few, there is the Radio Room.

In fairness, the studio where all of the New York Phil broadcasts are recorded, the Radio Room at Avery Fisher Hall, has



Art Streiber/NBC

recently undergone a complete renovation. However, prior to that, it resembled a set from a Woody Allen movie that takes place in the 1940s. Or a Hecht and MacArthur play. All that was missing was a roll-top desk and Hildy Johnson barking into a phone. But it is there that my producers, Larry Rock and Mark Travis, make yours truly sound, sort of, like an authority on classical music.

Make no mistake, I take the job quite seriously. It has been nothing less than an honor to read the "wrap arounds" for each concert. I try hard to make sure that our



Chris Lane

Alec Baldwin interviews Lang Lang after the pianist's performance with the New York Philharmonic on a *Live From Lincoln Center* broadcast of the Philharmonic's 2010 New Year's Eve program.

language and my reading fit the tone of the piece. I try to enunciate, even overly so, to allow even first-time listeners to understand what they are hearing and by what composer, with which conductors and soloists. I am loving every minute of it. Three hours of me stumbling over certain pronunciations and a take-out Chinese lunch later, Larry, Mark, and I have a couple of shows in the can. I love working with both of them. Two real gentlemen who never make me feel like I will never know half of what they know.

Perhaps most important is the amount of music I have been introduced to that I might have otherwise overlooked. Music of every style in the classical repertoire, and one of my favorite elements is the musicological history to which I have been exposed. And the names!! Some of them I will actually use to stay in hotels under. My favorite? British Mozart authority Cuthbert Girdlestone.

I have no musical training. However, as I have said on numerous occasions, I am having the time of my life serving as the bat boy for the New York Phil. **S**