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A Conductor Cannot Help But Remember Bernstein

by Nadine Brozan
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When Peter Tiboris steps up to the podium to conduct the Brooklyn Philharmonic in Carnegie Hall on Jan. 18, he will be using a baton once owned by Leonard Bernstein.

The ivory baton with an amber lion's head; for which Mr. Tiboris paid \$8,050 at the auction of Bernstein's possessions at Sotheby's...is more than a piece of musical equipment to him.

"I met Leonard Bernstein on two occasions," Mr. Tiboris said. "The first was in 1988 at Avery Fisher Hall and he had just finished a recording session with the Philharmonic. I had never met him, so I went onto the stage thinking he would be surrounded by people, but there was nobody there." As they began talking, Mr. Tiboris told Bernstein he was about to conduct Handel's Israel in Egypt.

"As Bernstein stepped onto the elevator to leave, he put his hand in the door to stop it and said, 'Maestro, do the Locusts movement in four, not eight,'" Mr. Tiboris recalled. "I rushed to my score and changed it immediately to do four beats to the measure, and, of course, it worked beautifully."

Two years later, after a performance of Mahler's Second Symphony conducted by Bernstein, Mr. Tiboris met him again backstage.

"There he was wearing a robe, collapsed in a chair, cigarette in one hand, scotch in the other," he said. "He looked up and said 'Peter Tiboris,

Midamerica Productions.' I was speechless." (Mr. Tiboris is the music director of Midamerica Productions, which brings professional and amateur musicians and singers from around the world to perform in New York.)

"He launched into a huge discussion of esthetics with me," Mr. Tiboris said. "As I walked away, he called, 'Maestro, did you do it in four or eight?' I put four fingers up, and he did a thumbs-up with a huge grin. The tears were streaming down my face and it took my breath away."



Conductor Peter Tiboris with amber and ivory baton purchased at the Bernstein sale at Sotheby's.