

# Mr Jaap van Zweden, SBS

## Honorary Fellow

### Citation

*At fifteen, I had my mind bent on learning.*

*At thirty, I stood firm.*

*At forty, I had no doubts.*

*At fifty, I knew the decrees of Heaven.*

*At sixty, my ear was attuned for truth.*

*At seventy, I could follow what my heart desired, without transgressing what was right.*

This oft-quoted passage from the *Analects* came to mind as I considered how to pay tribute to Maestro Jaap van Zweden today.

Maestro van Zweden embodies the first two lines better than most. The young Jaap had already been playing violin for 10 years when he won the Oskar Back violin competition at 15 years of age, allowing him to study at the Julliard School in New York. Having proven he was “bent on learning”, he went home a few years later to serve as the youngest concertmaster in the history of the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra. Throughout his 20s, he earned increasing acclaim not only as a concertmaster but also as a soloist, giving high-profile performances and making award-winning recordings. At 30, he clearly demonstrated the Confucian ideal of “standing firm”.

But at this point a new planet swam into his ken when, one day during a rehearsal in Berlin, the legendary Leonard Bernstein asked him to conduct so that Bernstein himself could go out into the concert hall to test the acoustics. Mr van Zweden had never, in his own words, “conducted a note in his life”. When Bernstein returned to the stage, he told him: “That was very bad. Even so, there was something there. Take this seriously.”

How many of us would pursue something new if the response we received upon our first attempt was “That was very bad”? Even if we then heard encouraging words, who among us would make a big gamble based on that? Why risk the solid, the stable, the secure? Why risk status and success by diverting our energies, dividing our focus?

And yet this is exactly what he did. He spent his 30s not just by continuing in the arena in which he was already secure but also by exploring, or exploding into, the new arena of conducting. Without putting down the bow, he picked up the baton. At 40 he was free from doubt.

Overcoming doubt was part of his personal life too, as one of his children, diagnosed with autism, was uncommunicative. But he and his wife kept singing to their son, until one day, a breakthrough was made. This moment, and the incremental steps that followed, proved forcefully that music can bridge human beings when nothing else can. But van Zweden demonstrated something equally important: that when all you have is doubt, when you do not know if you are heard, you must still reach out to touch people and to fill the world with beauty.

At 50, Maestro could certainly be said to “know the decrees of Heaven”. His experimentation with conducting had flowered into appointments as significant as Chief Conductor of the Royal Flemish Orchestra and Music Director of the Dallas Symphony Orchestra. The litany of his accomplishments as the Music Director of the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra since 2012 continues to grow long, as exemplified in the naming of the HK Phil as the “2019 *Gramophone* Orchestra of the Year” (the first time this honour has been bestowed on an Asian orchestra by the world’s leading classical music magazine) and by his appointment as Music Director of the world-renowned New York Philharmonic.

In recognition of his achievements and contributions to the performing arts in Hong Kong, Maestro van Zweden was recently awarded the Silver Bauhinia Star by the Hong Kong SAR Government. He has also extended his Music Directorship to 2024 summer, which will bring Maestro van Zweden’s extraordinary tenure as Music Director with the HK Phil to an impressive 12 years.

Now, weeks away from his 60th birthday, Maestro van Zweden certainly has his ear “attuned” to the music he brings to life with his now expert baton. Despite his constant trips and engagements, he remains attuned to a truth about the power of music. The Papageno Foundation he established with his wife promotes the practice and research of music therapy for autistic individuals. The Maestro aims to cut across the boundaries of genres and generations, demonstrating his openness to musical styles as diverse as Lady Gaga and techno. He seeks an ever-broadening sphere of impact and exploration, asserting that “if you want to have an international sound, you should go international”, and insisting on “just going places.... going. That will be the essential thing”.

At Lingnan, we define “liberal arts education” as a “transformation for life”. The easiest reading of this phrase is *transformation* as preparation: our students, almost all under 30, are not yet “standing firm”; our job is to prepare them to do so. But “transformation *for* life” also means for the duration of life: that, because life is continuously changing, we must continuously change with it. And this continuous change, this transformation, is for *life* — not just for a degree or a career, but for life — for curiosity, for connection, for excellence, for exploration. Maestro Jaap van Zweden has lived a life that exemplifies all of these virtues. Mr Chairman, I am honoured to present Mr Jaap van Zweden for the conferment of an honorary fellowship.

*Citation written and delivered by Professor Grace Chou Ai-ling*

# 梵志登先生

榮譽院士

## 贊辭

吾十有五而志于學，  
三十而立，  
四十而不惑，  
五十而知天命，  
六十而耳順，  
七十而從心所欲，不踰矩。

當我思量今天應該如何向梵志登大師致敬時，就想到《論語·為政》常常引用的這一章。

梵大師是「學」與「立」的表表者，比《為政》的首兩句有過之而無不及。15歲時，年紀小小已拉了10年小提琴，在Oskar Back小提琴比賽中勝出，得以遠赴紐約茱莉亞學院進修。梵大師苦學數年後返回家鄉，成為荷蘭皇家音樂廳樂團史上最年輕樂團首席小提琴手。在20來歲時，便擔任樂團的首席小提琴手，表現出色，漸受讚賞，小提琴獨奏亦然。他的演出觸目，而灌錄的唱片亦贏得獎項。孔子說「三十而立」，斯之謂也！

然而，這時他眼前來了一片新天地。一天在柏林排練時，赫赫有名、為人敬佩的指揮家李奧納德·伯恩斯坦請梵先生代他指揮，以便走到音樂廳測試聲音效果。當時梵先生從沒有指揮的經驗，他形容自己「生平從未指揮過一粒音」。伯恩斯坦回到台上便對他說：「不堪入目。話雖如此，卻不是一無是處。好好地去學吧。」

要是第一次嘗試新事物時得到的評語是「不堪入目」，試問多少人還會願意繼續嘗試？就算之後聽到有人鼓勵你，我們當中又有多少人會憑幾句話押下重注？本來已實實在在，安安樂樂，名成利就，為甚麼要捨安取險？本來已經名重望隆，成績斐然，為甚麼要分出氣力精神，到頭來或得不償失？

然而，這正正是梵大師選擇的路。他在小提琴方面已名成利就。過了30歲後，他既在此繼續勇猛精進，卻又致力於指揮這個新領域，耽思傍訊，鉤深致遠。沒有放下小提琴的拉弓，但亦提起了指揮棒。到了40歲，做到了「四十而不惑」。

梵大師在家亦要克服疑惑，因為其中一個小孩子患有自閉症，無法與人溝通。他和妻子不斷給這個兒子唱歌，直到有一天，情況改善了不少，後來亦慢慢進步，由此足見

在無法溝通卻無計可施的時候，音樂能把大家緊扣起來。大家亦可從梵大師和妻子身上看到同樣重要的一點：當你滿心疑惑，不知道人家是否明白時，仍要以言行感動人心，讓大家看到美善。

梵大師50歲時堪稱「知天命」。他鑽研音樂指揮經年，功夫已臻成熟，先後出任皇家法蘭德斯樂團的總指揮、達拉斯交響樂團的音樂總監等要職。2012年起擔任香港管弦樂團（港樂）音樂總監，碩果纍纍，當中包括帶領港樂勇奪英國《留聲機》雜誌「年度管弦樂團2019」大獎（《留聲機》是世界著名的古典音樂雜誌，港樂乃首個亞洲管弦樂團膺此殊榮）。此外，他亦出任世界知名的紐約愛樂的音樂總監。

梵大師最近剛獲香港特別行政區政府頒授銀紫荊星章，以表揚他在香港表演藝術界的成就與貢獻。他亦會留任港樂的音樂總監至2024年夏天，屆時他將出任港樂音樂總監一職達12年之久。

數星期後，梵大師便60歲了。他現在已經深於指揮之道，當然對自己指揮的美妙樂章瞭如指掌。他常常到海外演出，日理萬機，但他深明音樂的力量。梵大師與妻子成立了帕帕堅奴基金會，為自閉症患者提供音樂治療及進行相關研究。梵大師致力打破不同音樂類別和世代的藩籬，對音樂種類的態度開明，近至流行音樂天后Lady Gaga以至techno電子舞曲的音樂亦不會摒諸門外。他希望港樂能更具影響力，不斷爭取演出機會。他認為「若要國際知名，你就要到處走」，深信「你要不斷前進…只管前進。那很重要」。

在嶺南大學，我們說「博雅教育」能「成就一生」。「成就一生」最簡單的意思就是為「成就」而作準備：我們的學生，大部分都未滿30歲，尚未「立」，我們要做的就是教導他們，使他們待人處世都有所把握。不過，「成就一生」亦指終身學習改進。生活變動不居，我們亦要因時制宜，不斷改進。不是為了學位、事業，而是為了人生——為致知、為交朋、為至善、為格物。上述諸德具見於梵志登大師一生。主席先生，本人謹恭請閣下頒授榮譽院士銜予梵志登先生。

贊辭由周愛靈教授撰寫及宣讀