

UNIVERSITY MUSICAL SOCIETY

in association with Parke-Davis Pharmaceutical Research Division
of the Warner Lambert Company

ISAAC STERN

Violinist

ROBERT McDONALD

Pianist

Thursday Evening, January 30, 1992, at 8:00
Hill Auditorium, Ann Arbor, Michigan



*The University Musical Society expresses thanks to Parke-Davis
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The box office in the outer lobby is open during intermission for tickets to upcoming Musical Society concerts.

PROGRAM

Sonata in D major, K. 306 Mozart
Allegro con spirito
Andante cantabile
Allegretto

Sonata No. 5 in F major, Op. 24 ("Spring") Beethoven
Allegro
Adagio molto espressivo
Scherzo: allegro molto
Rondo: allegro ma non troppo

INTERMISSION

Four Pieces for Violin and Piano, Op. 7 Webern
Sehr langsam
Rasch
Sehr langsam
Bewegt

Romance in F minor, Op. 11 Dvořák

Sonata No. 3 in D minor, Op. 108 Brahms
Allegro
Adagio
Un poco presto e con sentimento
Presto agitato

Robert McDonald plays the Steinway piano available through Hammell Music, Inc., Livonia.
Isaac Stern is represented by ICM Artists, Ltd., New York City.
Mr. Stern records exclusively for CBS Masterworks/Sony Classics.

Sonata in D major, K. 306

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART (1756-1791)

Mozart's preferred instrument was the piano, but in his youth he was a fine violinist, too, and his father, who was a distinguished violin teacher, always thought that with a little more application the son could have been "the first violinist in Europe." As a composer, Mozart showed the way to what his era called the "piano sonata with violin accompaniment" into the nineteenth century's sonata for violin and piano, and a critic of his time was surprised to discover that his "sonatas require just as skillful a player on the violin as at the keyboard."

Convention then required that sonatas be published in groups of three or six, and when he composed this one during his stay in Paris in the summer of 1778, it filled out the set dedicated to the Electress Palatine. It is a big work in three movements — almost a concerto. There is a grand first movement, *Allegro con spirito*, and then an *Andante cantabile* slow movement with a main theme imitated (or perhaps even borrowed) from J. C. Bach, the beloved mentor of his childhood, who was in Paris that summer. The finale is a brilliant rondo, *Allegretto*, with contrasting *Allegro* episodes.

**Sonata No. 5 in F major,
Op. 24 ("Spring")**

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)

Beethoven's true domain as a public performer was the keyboard, and he was the greatest pianist of his time, but as a practical musician of his generation, he knew the violin well and wrote fluently and idiomatically for it. Posterity wishes he had written more, for in addition to the ten sonatas, we have only the great Concerto of 1806 and some little pieces. This Sonata and the Sonata No. 4 were written more or less simultaneously during 1800 and 1801. Beethoven had intended to issue them as a pair, under a single opus number, but when the engraver made the mistake of preparing the printing plates for them in different formats, they had

to be published separately, as Op. 23 and Op. 24. At some time in the course of its history (no one knows when), the sunny warmth of its melodies and the rustling figuration of its instrumental writing gave the Op. 24 the nickname "Spring" Sonata.

The *Allegro* first movement is an exceptional one, in which the violin is given the opportunity of leading off with the beautiful opening theme. The movement is long and richly textured, so elegantly harmonized that some of the beautiful bass lines for the pianist's left hand sound as though they could be the cello part of a great trio. The thematic subjects are assembled from smaller melodic materials that are then stretched to great length, clearly stated and later so freely recalled that only brief discussion and development are necessary. The second movement, *Adagio molto espressivo*, is a romantic song whose ornamented main theme is akin to that of the first. After an abbreviated Scherzo with playful rhythms, *Allegro molto*, comes a finale, *Allegro ma non troppo*, that is not the stereotypical fast and jolly Rondo, but a lyrical and poetic one, even more springlike than the first movement.

Four Pieces for Violin and Piano, Op. 7

ANTON WEBERN (1883-1945)

Born in Vienna, Anton Webern received his first instruction in music from his mother, an amateur pianist. He continued studies in piano, cello, and theory before entering the University of Vienna, where he studied harmony, counterpoint, and musicology. In 1904, he began private studies in composition with Arnold Schoenberg. Webern was active as a conductor in Vienna and Germany but, for the most part, devoted himself to composition.

After Hitler came to power in 1933, Webern's music was banned as a manifestation of "cultural Bolshevism" and "degenerate art," and his position became even more difficult in 1938, for his works could no longer be published. After his son was killed in an air bombardment of a train in February 1945, he and his wife fled from Vienna to Mittersill (near Salzburg) to stay with their married daughters. Webern's life ended tragically on the evening of September 15, 1945, when he

was accidentally shot and killed by an American soldier after stepping outside his son-in-law's residence.

Webern was a composer whose importance and worth are not measured by the small number of his brief compositions. His opus numbers run only to 31, and they fill just four LP records; but the musical expression of the microcosms he created is so condensed, his craft so precise, his ideas so pure in conception that his works affected the composers of Europe and America during the 25 years after the Second World War more than any other single influence. Stravinsky acknowledged the use of Webern's methods in his latest works; jazz composers have professed to follow Webern's ideas of tone color; and analytical treatises have been published in several languages. The International Webern Festival celebrated the centennial of his birth in December 1983 in Vienna.

Webern composed his Op. 7 in 1910, at the beginning of a period of about five years that he was to devote to making his works as concise and as concentrated as possible. The Four Pieces last only about five minutes altogether, but they seem to encompass a whole world of expression, following the dictum of Webern's master, Schoenberg, who said that a poem could be contained in a glance, a novel in a sigh. Each of these tiny pieces is a pithy aphorism whose every moment — every note and every silence — Webern loaded with meaning and expression. The first piece is very slow (*Sehr langsam*); the second, quick (*Rasch*); the third, very slow (*Sehr langsam*); and the fourth, agitated (*Bewegt*).

Romance in F minor, Op. 11

ANTONIN DVORAK (1841-1904)

Antonin Dvořák's father was a village innkeeper and butcher who hoped to pass his trade on to his son, but the young man turned instead toward music, took up the violin and organ, and at age 16 left home to study in Prague. Five years later, he joined the orchestra of the National Theater playing the viola (which in those days was the instrument of failed violinists), and soon he began to test his creative powers with extended compositions in the classical forms.

Chamber music had an important place in Dvořák's life, and many of his earliest

works were quartets and quintets, modeled after Beethoven and Schubert, that he played with his colleagues and friends while developing his craft. Among them was a String Quartet in F minor, written in 1873, which he intended to be an optimistic work about the changes in his life that would follow his marriage later that year. In 1875, Dvořák was "discovered" by Brahms, and his career suddenly blossomed, but the Quartet remained unperformed. Dvořák did not abandon the work completely, however, but extracted from its slow movement a beautiful theme that he used as the basis of a new composition, this lovely Romance.

Sonata No. 3 in D minor, Op. 108

JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833-1897)

The musical manner that Brahms adopted as a young man, and the skill that he showed when he was only 20, led Robert Schumann to proclaim him, in 1853, "a musician chosen to give ideal expression to his times, a young man over whose cradle Graces and Heroes have stood watch." From the very beginning, he was the Brahms of noble melody, of rich texture, of rhythmic freedom, of large statements in big forms beautifully written for the instruments. This does not mean that there is little difference in the music he wrote at 20 and at 55. He matured and grew and said different things at different times, but when young, he had found his own eloquent language, which he would use consistently and well until the end of his life.

Schumann's pronouncement also mentioned that Brahms had already written some violin sonatas, and years later, a pupil said that he had discarded five of them before composing the one that he thought good enough to preserve and present to the world. He completed it in 1879, and in 1886, he wrote a second.

The third and last of his violin sonatas, completed in 1888, is a profoundly introspective and meditative work, rich in the calm and the insight of an aging master. The opening movement, *Allegro*, is a lyric masterpiece whose pages are marked by a certain restlessness and agitation that are absent from the sustained melodic line and the quiet, contemplative mood of the *Adagio*. The third movement, *Un poco presto e con sentimento*,

is not really a scherzo, but it has a light whimsy and poignant charm that set it in contrast with the others. In the last movement, *Presto agitato*, some of the exuberance of Brahms' earlier works returns with a vigor-

ous, headlong rush that often recalls the Hungarian gypsy music we hear in so many of his brilliant finales.

— Notes by Leonard Burkat

About the Artists

Isaac Stern is recognized worldwide as one of the foremost violinists of this century. Throughout his more than 50 years as a professional musician, he has appeared on the world's most prestigious concert stages, guided the careers of countless young musicians, and devoted himself to the advancement of the arts nationally and internationally. Mr. Stern is one of the most recorded musical artists of our time, with more than 100 recordings of over 200 works by 63 composers to his credit. He has been an exclusive CBS Masterworks (Sony Classical) recording artist for 45 years and was named that label's first Artist Laureate in 1985 in recognition of this long-standing association. Renowned for his highly acclaimed interpretations of the standard repertoire, Mr. Stern is also an avowed champion of contemporary music, having performed many world and American premieres, both in concert and on record.

Additional career highlights for Mr. Stern include his work for feature films and television, notably the Academy Award-winning documentary "From Mao to Mozart: Isaac Stern in China" and the CBS broadcast of "Carnegie Hall: The Grand Reopening," which received an Emmy award in 1987, as well as the films "A Journey to Jerusalem," "Tonight We Sing," and "Humoresque." He has been featured on innumerable televised concert broadcasts and on major talk shows and news programs of all the networks.

Mr. Stern's schedule for the current season is characteristically broad in scope. He appears as soloist with the National Symphony Orchestra under Rostropovich, The Cleveland Orchestra led by Christoph von Dohnányi, and the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, among other orchestras. During November, he made a major European tour with pianist Yefim Bronfman, giving recitals in Rome, Milan, London, Copenhagen, Stockholm, Prague, Budapest, and other capitals. He then toured the Soviet Union, performing with Mr. Bronfman in Moscow and Lenin-



grad, giving concerts with the Moscow Philharmonic and Leningrad Philharmonic orchestras, and offering master classes at the Moscow Conservatory. In the United States, he is currently making a transcontinental recital tour, and next month he joins Jean-Pierre Rampal and Mstislav Rostropovich at Avery Fisher Hall, Lincoln Center, to celebrate Mr. Rampal's 70th birthday. He also continues his collaboration, now in its third season, with Emanuel Ax, Jaime Laredo, and Yo-Yo Ma for quartet performances, on tour and at Carnegie Hall, and for a Sony Classical recording.

Mr. Stern was an originating member of the National Endowment for the Arts and is currently Chairman of the Board of the America-Israel Cultural Foundation and Chairman and founder of the Jerusalem Music Center. As president of Carnegie Hall for 30 years, he spearheaded the drives to save the Hall from demolition in 1960 and to restore it in 1986. He is the recipient of numerous honors, all among the most prestigious in the performing arts, and holds honorary degrees

from eleven institutions, including Bucknell University, Columbia University, New York University, John Hopkins University, the University of Tel Aviv, and Yale University.

Isaac Stern acknowledges that all of his activities stem from his love of music. A poignant example of his humanity took place in Jerusalem during last year's Persian Gulf War. During a concert of the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra, air raid sirens sounded, signaling a missile attack. As orchestra members left the stage and the audience donned their gas masks, Isaac Stern stood alone onstage and played a Bach *Sarabande*. "I thought it would be helpful to go out and play something," he said later. "It was something very special to be useful and needed. It doesn't happen very often in life."

Born in Kreminecz, Russia, in 1920, Isaac Stern came to America when he was ten months old. Raised and educated in San Francisco, he started playing the violin at age eight. His principal teacher, Naoum Blinder, was concertmaster of the San Francisco Symphony. After his recital debut at age 13, Mr. Stern made his formal orchestral debut in 1936, playing the Brahms Violin Concerto with the San Francisco Symphony, a concert that was broadcast nationally. His New York recital debut followed at Town Hall in 1937, and his Carnegie Hall debut was in 1943. He plays a Guarnerius del Gesu violin.

Isaac Stern first visited Ann Arbor in 1947. In these years, he has made six orchestral appearances (with the Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, and Baltimore symphony orchestras) and tonight performs his sixth recital.

In the past several years, Robert McDonald has distinguished himself as the recipient of a number of prizes, both in this country and abroad. Winner of the Gold Medal at the Busoni International Piano Competition in Bolzano, Italy, he also won the top prize at the University of Maryland International Piano Competition. In addition, he was the recipient of the National Federation of Music Clubs Arts Award and the winner of the Washington International Competition for Pianists. In 1988, he was honored with a Solo Recitalist Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts.

Mr. McDonald has concertized extensively as a recitalist, chamber musician, and soloist with orchestras throughout the United States, Latin America, and Europe. He has been a participant at the Marlboro, Carmoor, Lucerne, Bergen, Besançon, and Montreux Festivals; toured nationally with Music from Marlboro; and has been a guest artist with the Juilliard, American, Fine Arts, and Orlando string quartets.

A *magna cum laude* graduate of Lawrence University, Robert McDonald continued his studies at Philadelphia's Curtis Institute with Rudolf Serkin, Seymour Lipkin, and Mieczyslaw Horszowski; at the Manhattan School of Music with Gary Graffman; and at The Juilliard School with Beveridge Webster. He is currently a member of the piano faculty at the Oberlin College-Conservatory of Music and, during the summer, is the director of keyboard programs at the Taos School of Music and Chamber Music Festival in New Mexico. He has recorded for the Vox Cum Laude, Musical Heritage Society, Bridge, Sony Classical, and CRI labels.

Robert McDonald made his Ann Arbor debut in 1982 with violinist Elmar Oliveira and now returns with Isaac Stern for his second appearance.

