

VANITY FAIR

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Hall of Fame



VANITY FAIR NOMINATES ITZHAK PERLMAN

BECAUSE Itzhak Perlman believes in the future of classical music. One of the pre-eminent violinists of our time—he has been a soloist with many of the world's leading orchestras and made nearly 100 recordings in his long career—the 65-year-old musician is equally devoted in his roles as teacher, coach, and mentor. In 1993 his wife, Toby, founded the Perlman Music Program on Long Island, New York, to develop “the next generation of world-class musicians,” and that soon bloomed into a full-fledged teaching role for the maestro. BECAUSE he believes in the individual voice of every musician, the unique spark of talent that, once recognized, must be cultivated. Perlman is cautious about precocious virtuosity and says that sometimes it's better for a “12-year-old violinist to sound like a 12-year-old,” trusting that talent will mature as a good wine does. BECAUSE he's living proof that art can triumph over adversity. As a child, Perlman contracted polio and lost the ability to walk, but he put faith in music to carry him forward. He continues to play fund-raising concerts to help eradicate the disease wherever it still lingers. BECAUSE of his empathy with the disabled, he speaks out in support of better access for them, challenging airlines, concert-hall owners, and politicians alike. Even today, the star musician is obliged to enter many a performance space “through the kitchen or through the garage.” BECAUSE he trusts in the unifying power of music to communicate across political and national divisions. As an international soloist, Perlman believes that “cultural exchange is the beginning of things to come.” BECAUSE he's a musical optimist still enthralled by his art. “In the last couple of years, I've been getting more and more happy about making music,” he says.

—DAMIAN FOWLER

Itzhak Perlman and his wife, Toby, photographed in their apartment in New York City.