NOMINATION FOR THE 1997 HEINZ AWARD
CATEGORY: ARTS AND HUMANITIES:

Isaac Stern

Isaac Stern's achievements as a musician, teacher, philosopher, speaker, arts advocate and humanitarian have marked our century and the history of our time. He has a personality and a soul large enough to touch the millions who have been fortunate enough to see him, hear him, and learn from him. As a public figure, Mr. Stern has been an advocate for causes that are noble and good, and is able to speak truth to power. He has a remarkable gift to connect with and persuade people to act in concert, whether to save a Carnegie Hall or to establish a National Endowment for the Arts.

Born in Russia, later moving to the United States as a youth, Mr. Stern has lived and traveled throughout the world. While still rooted in his own specific culture and history, his work and beliefs transcend cultural barriers. He has spent a lifetime building bridges for others to cross, with a goal of keeping music and the arts central to human experience.

His virtuosity as an artist is world-renowned. Both a technical master and a genius at expression, Mr. Stern is acclaimed for his warmth of sound and almost vocal approach to phrasing and inflection. His tone is sweet and rich, and his sense of style is impeccable--even in the most dazzling or moving piece, the artistic and emotional content of the music is never overshadowed by showiness or personality. His interpretations--though uniquely his own--never fail to impart the composer's intent. Above all, he is a consummate communicator, able to draw listeners into the music.

Mr. Stern has brought his gifts of human warmth and technical excellence to audiences for sixty years, through thousands of concerts and millions of copies of recordings with every major orchestra, conductor, and concert hall worldwide. He has retained what is, among artists of his stature, an unusual commitment to appearing as soloist or in chamber concerts at dozens of college campuses and medium-sized cities each year, reinforcing the magic of live concert experiences. Millions have also heard Mr. Stern's work in the films "Fiddler on the Roof" and "Humoresque," for which he provided the violin solos. He is a charismatic mentor and guide for those artists among us, and equally for those who recognize that there lies within each one of us yearnings toward artistic expression.

Carnegie Hall has occupied the heart, mind and soul of Isaac Stern since his debut in 1943. With his passion, his eloquence and determination, he spearheaded the campaign to save the Hall, both for its history and its future. Recruiting his friends, philanthropists and financial experts, Isaac forged ahead to enlist the help of the government itself. His actions created new legislation, in which Carnegie Hall was reborn as a public trust. Mr. Stern was elected President, and has been the guiding genius of the Board and staff ever since. The modern incarnation of Carnegie Hall, a central forum in the world of the arts, and in arts education on all levels, would not have taken its place without Isaac Stern's constant attention, energy, prodding and nurturing.

Mr. Stern's vision goes far beyond this generation. Even now, at 76, he continues to inspire young musical talent to find its way, as he has throughout his own career as mentor to artists such as Yo-

Yo Ma, Midori, Yefim Bronfman, Itzhak Perlman and so many others. One of the architects of the Jerusalem Music Festival (in which talented young people from all over the world join together to learn the art and performance of chamber music), Mr. Stern instituted similar workshops at Carnegie Hall. He has displayed remarkable ability to interact with young performers, remaining attentive to the career developments of as many as possible. As a teacher he has a unique gift for communication and expression; when he extends his hand outwards to future generations of students, he is not forcing his will upon them. His hand beckons them until they can make the connection themselves, thanks to Mr. Stern and his ability to reveal their own power to communicate. His teaching goes beyond the musical realm; his deep self-knowledge and awareness are an inspiration to others, encouraging them to examine their own beliefs and passions.

He is a true musical ambassador for the United States, working ceaselessly within our country and abroad, bringing the vibrant spirit of his art – and the American spirit – to countless audiences. Through tours and workshops, he has made innumerable contributions to international cultural life, not just in the Western world but reaching all over the world, including Europe, Asia, the Americas and the Middle East. He has made more than 100 trips to Israel alone, and since 1960, he has been deeply involved with the America-Israel Cultural Foundation, of which he is now Chairman Emeritus. He has been a national voice arguing that pursuit of excellence in the arts is part of this country's glory, and that America's pre-eminence in the arts can and should be brought to this entire country as a gift and as an example. Mr. Stern has the unique ability to size up an audience – whether of connoisseurs or children – and to bring them common sense lessons and pathways into music. For those who cannot match him in matters of music, he brings the challenge to follow his example in public service, wherever and whatever we can support.

Outside the United States, Isaac Stern's activities are legend, from his performance atop Israel's Mount Scopus following the Six Day War in 1967, to his historic tour of China, documented in the Academy Award-winning film, "From Mao to Mozart." In 1991, during the Gulf War, many people were inspired by the sight of one man, playing in Jerusalem before an audience wearing gas masks during a missile attack. That man, Isaac Stern, brought music back to a country that for several weeks under threat of attack had heard none.

Mr. Stern's many honors and awards include the Albert Schweitzer Music Award; the Kennedy Center Honors Award; the American Symphony Orchestra League's Gold Baton; the Legion of Honor, awarded to him by the French Republic; the National Medal of the Arts; and the highest honor the United States can award a civilian, the Presidential Medal of Freedom. In January 1997, Carnegie Hall honored Mr. Stern's lifetime of achievement, focusing on his tireless support of the Hall. Over forty world leaders sent tributes, including President Clinton, who in 1993 appointed Mr. Stern as a member of the President's Council on the Humanities. Mrs. Clinton lauded Mr. Stern for his work as an educator and artist whose pursuit of excellence has been a shining example of what is possible to the entire world. And that night, the main auditorium was dedicated to him with the honorary name "The Isaac Stern Auditorium."

This year, in which so many are paying tribute to Mr. Stern, Carnegie Hall is proud to nominate him for the 1997 Heinz Award for Arts and Humanities. We believe he exemplifies the generous spirit, compassion, selfless work, and continual search for excellence that the Heinz Awards were created to honor.