

LIVE FROM LINCOLN CENTER
January 14, 2004, 8:00 p.m. on PBS
Joshua Bell & Orpheus
at the Penthouse

On Wednesday evening, January 14, Live From Lincoln Center will continue a January tradition. Early in January, 2000 the Kaplan Penthouse, to situated high atop the building that houses Lincoln Center's administration offices, was converted into an intimate salon with Itzhak Perlman performing favorite shorter works from the repertory for violin and piano. Our microphones and cameras were there to capture the special flavor of the evening---as they were for the following two Januarys when Renée Fleming and then again Perlman entertained the invited audience in the Penthouse as well as the national audience on television and radio. The 2004 edition of performance in the Penthouse will bring to you, the Live From Lincoln Center audience, one of the most charismatic young artists now before the public: violinist Joshua Bell.

I first met Joshua Bell some 20 years ago in Charleston, South Carolina at the annual Spoleto Festival. He was then a teenager, but already a force to be reckoned with. Playing with some of the hallowed names of the concert stage, he already had the distinguishing characteristics of a superb artist: impeccable technique, a distinctive sound, and a questioning musical mind.

A native of Bloomington, Indiana, where his psychiatrist father and pianist mother were faculty members of Indiana University, Joshua had made his debut as a soloist with the Bloomington Symphony Orchestra in 1975--at the age of 7! Another member of Indiana University's faculty at the time was the renowned violinist and pedagogue, Josef Gingold. Gingold had studied with the great Belgian violinist Eugene Ysaye (who became Conductor of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra early in the 20th century), before settling into a life as an orchestral musician, first in Toscanini's NBC Symphony Orchestra and later as concertmaster of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra and the Cleveland Orchestra. But it was as a teacher that Gingold achieved his greatest prominence; he became Joshua Bell's most important musical influence and inspiration, and Gingold, in turn, recognized a brilliant talent in in the young man.

Joshua Bell first came to national attention as the grand prize winner in the Seventeen Magazine/General Motors National Concerto Competition, which led to his debut, at the age of 14, with Riccardo Muti and the Philadelphia Orchestra. That was the beginning of a career that has taken him to every important concert stage the world over in the ensuing two decades. Today, at the age of 36, he is generally recognized as one of the master violinists of our time.

Joshua Bell's musical appetite is voracious. He of course plays all the standard works in the repertory, but that questioning mind has led him to investigate much

other music. The distinguished British composer, Nicolas Maw, wrote a Violin Concerto for him; and he was invited to play the soundtrack solos for the film, *The Red Violin*, whose score was composed by the brilliant American composer, John Corigliano. Two concert works for violin and orchestra were extracted by Corigliano from his score: a Chaconne for Violin and Orchestra, and ultimately a full-fledged four-movement Violin Concerto. Joshua has played and recorded both of them. He is also a veteran of numerous television appearances, including two performances on the Grammy telecasts.

For his Live From Lincoln Center debut Joshua Bell will play a wide-ranging program of popular favorites. The full specifics were not yet set at the time of my writing this piece, but the music will range from uninhibited virtuoso showpieces to more contemplative and ruminative works. And in keeping with his sense of the history of the violin, he will feature works by one of the great violinist-composers of the past, Fritz Kreisler, and will dedicate the concert to Josef Gingold. His colleagues on the program will be the players of New York's sterling Orpheus Chamber Orchestra and the pianist Simon Mulligan.

I used the word "history" in the paragraph above. There is a rather unique history to the violin Joshua will be playing on our telecast. A Stradivari from that master's greatest period, it was acquired in the early years of the 20th century by the distinguished Polish violinist, Bronislaw Huberman (who in 1936 formed what was then called the Palestine Symphony Orchestra, the forerunner of today's Israel Philharmonic). In one of those bizarre backstage happenings, the violin was stolen and disappeared from view. More than 50 years later an otherwise unremarkable man made a deathbed confession: he had stolen the violin and had been playing it in taverns and nightclubs. Years of painstaking labor went into restoring the instrument to its one-time glory. When Joshua had the opportunity to play it in the showroom of a British instrument dealer, he knew he had found the violin of his dreams.

This, then, is some of the background for what promises to be a most memorable Live From Lincoln Center evening: Joshua Bell at the Penthouse. The date: Wednesday evening, January 14. I leave you with the usual reminder to check your local PBS station for the exact date and time in your area, since some stations on the network schedule the program by tape delay.

See you then!