

STEVEN ISSERLIS

2000/2001 Season

Steven Isserlis is a wonderful cellist whose commitment and obvious pleasure in music making is an inspiration to audiences and fellow-musicians alike. Two years ago his passion for all things musical was recognised in the 1998 Birthday Honours list and he was awarded a CBE for services to music.

Steeped in music from birth - his grandfather was the Russian pianist and composer Julius Isserlis, while older branches of his family tree have a direct line to Felix Mendelssohn - Steven Isserlis has communicated through music from an early age. It is not surprising therefore to find that his musical colleagues are also his closest friends, and his chamber concerts - often with collaborators Joshua Bell, Pamela Frank, Stephen Hough, Olli Mustonen and Tabea Zimmermann - are sought after by festivals such as Verbier, Salzburg and Edinburgh, and constitute a high-point of the Wigmore Hall's calendar.

Steven Isserlis's passion for chamber music does not however preclude a full international schedule, playing with the major UK, European, American and Asian orchestras. In recent seasons Isserlis has been heard with the Berlin Philharmonic, Chicago Symphony, Cleveland Orchestra, London Symphony Orchestra, Philharmonia Orchestra, Deutsche Symphonie Orchester Berlin, Czech Philharmonic, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Australian Chamber Orchestra, working with amongst others Vladimir Ashkenazy, Sir Colin Davis, Christopher Eschenbach and Leonard Slatkin, as well as the late Sir Georg Solti.

As Artistic Director of IMS-Prussia Cove, a role he inherited from founder Sandor Vegh, Steven Isserlis's energy and passion for communicating is evident in the annual master classes and chamber music sessions that he leads each April. He is currently writing a children's book about composers for Faber and Faber.

Steven Isserlis's consuming interest in music extends through performance and teaching to a fascination with musicological research and his programmes are peppered with performances of rarely heard works by both well and lesser-known composers. This zeal, combined with his passionate advocacy of Schumann led to Isserlis being awarded the Stadt-Zwickau Robert Schumann Prize in 2000. Previous winners - chosen for their outstanding contribution to the understanding of Schumann's music - include conductors Nikolaus Harnoncourt, Wolfgang Sawallisch and Kurt Masur, pianists Sviatoslav Richter and Emil Gilels and baritone Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau. Isserlis also brings his musicological enthusiasm into the recording studio with cd's such as *Forgotten Romance, Cello World*, a disc of trios by Brahms, Schumann and Frühling and most recently, a recording of Saint-Saëns Cello Concerto No. 2 for RCA Red Seal. Isserlis is also fond of devising themed 'festivals': notably the 1989 Schumann Festival at the Wigmore Hall; and Mendelssohn and Brahms projects at the 1997 and 2000 Salzburg Festivals respectively.

Isserlis's commitment to expanding the repertoire available to his instrument informs his interest in both period performance and contemporary cello repertoire. He performs with such as the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, the English Baroque Soloists, the Orchestra Revolutionnaire et Romantique, the London Classical Players and 'La Stagione', with conductors such as John Eliot Gardiner and Roger Norrington, as well as in recital with forte-pianist Melvyn Tan and harpsichordist Maggie Cole. In recent years Isserlis has premiered works by John Tavener, Peter Maxwell Davis, Lowell Liebermann, John Woolrich, Carl Vine and Robert Saxton. Last year Isserlis devised and edited *Unbeaten Tracks*, a collection of eight contemporary miniatures for the cello by composers such as Mark-Anthony Turnage and Colin Matthews aimed at children and amateur cellists.

On his many recordings for RCA Red Seal, Isserlis has covered a broad range of repertoire. Concertos by Schumann, Barber and Saint-Saëns sit alongside rare repertoire and works for other instruments adapted by Isserlis for the cello. Isserlis has been nominated for the Mercury Music Prize on two separate occasions for his recordings of Tavener's *The Protecting Veil* and *Svyati*, with the former recording winning a Gramophone Award. He was awarded the Deutsche Schallplattenpreis for his Schumann recording and a cd of works by Janacek, Prokofiev and Shostakovich with Olli Mustonen. Isserlis's recording of the Haydn concerti was nominated for a Gramophone Award (as were his *Cello World* and *Forgotten Romance* discs) and won a Classic CD award. His disc of works by Richard Strauss recorded with the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra and Stephen Hough conducted by Lorin Maazel will be released in the late spring.

This season's highlights include performances of Bach's unaccompanied Cello Suites throughout Europe and the UK; two concerts at the Wigmore Hall featuring the works of neglected composer Carl Frühling (to be repeated in Vienna and Berlin); and a series devised with the London Philharmonic Orchestra entitled *Sleeping Beauties*. Abroad, in addition to the Bach Suites, Steven can be heard in Sweden, Finland, Greece, Germany, Switzerland, Belgium, The Netherlands, Austria, Canada and Australia. He will make his debut with the Israel Philharmonic under Frans Bruggen in June 2001 and perform with the Philadelphia Orchestra under Ashkenazy and the Detroit Symphony Orchestra under Paavo Jarvi in the United States.

Extra-musical enthusiasms include the novels of Wilkie Collins and R C Hutchinson, the films of the Marx Brothers and Indian food!

The Nippon Music Foundation of Japan has kindly loaned the Feuermann Stradivarius of 1730 to Steven Isserlis

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