

# UNIVERSITY MUSICAL SOCIETY

In Association With Parke-Davis Research, Warner-Lambert Company

## Mstislav Rostropovich, Cellist with Sara Wolfensohn, Pianist

Sunday Afternoon, January 10, 1993, at 4:00  
Hill Auditorium, Ann Arbor, Michigan

### PROGRAM

- Sonata in F major for Cello and Piano, Op. 6 . . . . . Richard Strauss  
Allegro con brio  
Andante ma non troppo  
Allegro vivo
- Suite No. 5 in C minor for Unaccompanied Cello, BWV 1011 . . . . . Bach  
Prelude - Fugue  
Allemande  
Courante  
Sarabande  
Gavotte I  
Gavotte II  
Gigue

### INTERMISSION

- Vocalise . . . . . Rachmaninoff
- Sonata in D minor for Cello and Piano, Op. 40 . . . . . Shostakovich  
Allegro non troppo - Largo  
Allegro  
Largo  
Allegro

Mstislav Rostropovich is represented by Columbia Artists Management Inc., New York City.

Recordings: Erato, CBS Masterworks, Sony Classical, Angel/Melodya, London,  
and Deutsche Grammophon



## Program Notes

Sonata in F major for Cello  
and Piano, Op. 6  
Richard Strauss (1864-1949)

Richard Strauss's creative career began in 1870, when he was six years old, and continued until he wrote his beautiful last songs, in 1948, seventy-eight years later. As a boy, he was brought up on a strict diet of the classics – Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven – for his father, the famous solo horn player of the Munich court orchestra, was dogmatically conservative in his musical tastes. The elder Strauss disapproved of such “modernists” as Chopin, Mendelssohn, and Schumann, who had died some thirty or more years earlier, and he detested the music of the “radicals,” Liszt and Wagner, who laid the foundation for Richard Strauss's greatest mature works.

Strauss composed the sonata during the summer of 1882, when he had just completed his preparatory studies and was about to enter the University of Munich. It was performed in public for the first time in December 1883, by the great cellist Hanus Wihan, his father's colleague in the orchestra, who was later to be closely associated with Dvořák, and to whom Strauss dedicated the work. The music has a natural fluency that is the sign of a true composer, even a young one whose skills are not yet fully formed.

Although its structures are classical in spirit, the work could not have been written without knowing the music of Mendelssohn and Schumann. The first movement, *Allegro con brio*, even opens with the kind of leaping and soaring theme that would distinguish Strauss's later compositions. The musical high points of this movement are the climactic fugal section of the development and the marvelous combination of its two principal subjects in the coda. The central slow movement, *Andante ma non troppo*, is a lyrical song without words, but a song of great seriousness. In the Finale, *Allegro vivo*, the mood turns lighter, as the young composer works his way through a witty rondo with a rather operatic melody as its recurring principal subject.

Suite No. 5 in C minor for  
Unaccompanied Cello, BWV 1011  
Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

In 1717, Bach was appointed composer and music director to Prince Leopold, ruler of the tiny state of Anhalt-Cöthen, an accomplished musician with a great appetite for instrumental music, and it was at his court that Bach wrote much of his chamber music. We know that Bach was the greatest keyboard player of his time and that he liked to play the viola in ensembles, but he did not play the cello. Being Bach, however, he mastered any musical medium for which he chose to compose. In 1774, Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach wrote to J. N. Forkel, the scholar who was collecting material for the first book-length study of his father, “He understood the capabilities of all the string instruments perfectly. This is shown by his solos for the violin and cello without bass [accompaniment].” These “solos,” six for violin and six for cello, are among Bach's most extraordinary inventions.

They are full of mysterious musical and mechanical problems. There is more music in them than can be played, much more music than is apparent from a simple reading of the notes. Bach was a supremely practical man, and he put down on paper only the notes needed to tell the performer where to put his or her fingers. Much of the rest of the music is really in the minds of the listener and the player. It is implicit in what is written, and to apprehend it requires acts of memory over a short period of time, measured, in places, in little fractions of a second, a mental process like “seeing” in a painting details that are only hinted by the artist.

A suite, in Bach's time, consisted essentially of a formal opening movement that was a kind of musical call to attention, and then a series of stylized adaptations of 16th-century dances that had moved from the ballroom to the concert-room in the 17th century. In Bach's six cello suites the preludes vary considerably in character, but they are all designed to fix the home key



firmly in mind. With few exceptions, the movements of each suite are in the same key, and Bach uses the same sequence of dances in all the suites, except for the next-to-last movements. These "galanteries" were then still popular as social dances: minuets, bourrées and gavottes.

In the fifth cello suite, Bach also specifies a variant of the usual tuning of the instrument's highest string, in order to make a different harmonic vocabulary available. The *Prelude* of this Suite is in two parts, in the manner of a French opera overture, the first grave, the second a lively fugue. Next are a meditative *Allemande*, a dance of German origin; a quick *Courante*, a complex French running (or jumping) dance; a slow and stately Spanish *Sarabande*; a pair of French *Gavottes*; and a closing *Gigue*, derived from the Anglo-Irish jig.

### **Vocalise, Op. 34, No. 14**

Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873-1943)

*Vocalise* is the last song in a set of fourteen that Rachmaninoff composed and published in 1912 as his Op. 34. They were dedicated to some of the fine Russian singers of the era – four of them to Feodor Chaliapin. The texts of thirteen of them were selected from the works of Pushkin, Balmont and other great Russian poets, but the fourteenth is a vocalise, or wordless song. This *Vocalise* quickly became one of Rachmaninoff's most popular works and is now often performed in instrumental versions too.

### **Sonata in D minor for Cello and Piano, Op. 40**

Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-1975)

History seems to be preparing itself for a long struggle to decide which was the true Shostakovich – if any. It is generally agreed that he is not to be found in the occasional, political works. But the ironist and satirist of the early films and ballets, the classicist of some of the chamber music and symphonies and the tragedian of the last ones seem to be wholly different people, not one

single versatile composer, saying very different things in very different ways. In January 1934, his opera *Lady Macbeth of Mtsekn* was performed for the first time, and in the course of that year he also wrote this Cello Sonata. The harsh human realism of the opera did not conform to "socialist realism" – an aesthetic concept still in process of formulation that would later get the composer into serious difficulties with the authorities – but the Sonata is the kind of work that was always welcomed by the debaters on all sides of the difficult Shostakovich question.

A Soviet biographer of the composer found that "charmingly chaste purity of feeling is a feature of the Sonata. The broad melodies bring out its deeply rooted bonds with classical tradition, primarily with the traditions of Russian classical music. It is like a sudden ray of sunshine, unlike the dismal grotesqueries of his operas or the sarcastic eccentricities of his orchestral suites. Periods of spiritual and purely musical enlightenment existed in the Shostakovich of those years, in contrast with parody and buffoonery." [Abridged] It is tempting to dismiss the works welcomed by official propagandists and apologists, but to do so is like punishing the messenger who brings bad news. The rich lyricism that accounts for the Sonata's warm reception by Soviet critics is real, and it also accounts for the fact that musicians in the rest of the world, to whom those critics' opinions mean nothing, have also embraced this work – for reasons purely musical, not political.

The Sonata's first movement is built with classical simplicity. It is an *Allegro non troppo* based on two contrasting themes, the first elegiac, the second romantic. Next is an energetic scherzo, *Allegro*, full of colorful writing for the instruments, rich in the kind of musical wit and good humor of which Shostakovich was the greatest master since Haydn. In the slow movement, *Largo*, a quietly dramatic introductory recitative leads into a beautiful song of the kind called a "romance" in Russian. The rondo-like finale, *Allegro*, is rich in events, as passing episodes shift from perky to passionate to pastoral to popular.

– Notes by Leonard Burkat





## About the Artists

**Mstislav Rostropovich** is recognized internationally as a consummate musician and an outspoken defender of human rights and artistic freedom. Widely considered to be the world's greatest living cellist, he has recorded virtually the entire cello repertoire and has inspired some of this era's finest composers to create works especially for him. Now in his sixteenth season as Music Director of the National Symphony Orchestra, he is also President of the International Festival of Evian in France.

Mr. Rostropovich's humanitarian achievements have long been recognized around the world. One of his most recent projects has been raising funds for the first modern, fully-equipped children's hospital in Moscow. His performance at the site of the Berlin Wall, two days after its destruction began, was covered by newscasts throughout the world. In July 1991, he gave a concert in Prague that he had promised to the nation in 1968, to take place when the last Soviet soldier left Czechoslovakian soil.

Among the recent accolades that have been bestowed upon him are the Presiden-

tial Medal of Freedom, Knight Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire, and Commander of the Legion of Honor in France (making him only the second non-French citizen to receive this most distinguished title). He has also received the Officer's Cross of the Order of Merit of West Germany and a Certificate of Commendation from the Organization of American States, and he was elected to the Academy of Arts of the French Institute, often called the "Forty Immortals."

Other honors bestowed upon Mr. Rostropovich include the Albert Schweitzer Music Award and the Ernst von Siemens Foundation Music Prize, previously given only to Benjamin Britten and Olivier Messiaen. He is an Honorary Member of the Academy of St. Cecilia in Rome, Academy of Arts and Sciences of the United States, Royal Academy of Music of England, and Royal Swedish Academy, and a Fellow of the Royal College of Music in London. Eighteen different nations have bestowed more than sixty major awards upon him, and he has received medals and keys from dozens of cities in Great Britain,



France, Greece, Japan, Israel, Spain, Venezuela, and Portugal. In addition, he holds more than thirty honorary doctorates and degrees from educational institutions around the world, including Harvard, Yale, and Princeton in the United States; Cambridge and Oxford in England; and Trinity in Dublin. While still a Soviet citizen he received many honors, including the Lenin Prize (the nation's highest honor at that time), the Stalin Prize, and the title People's Artist of the USSR.

Mstislav Rostropovich's leadership of the National Symphony Orchestra is among the longest and most impressive of current music directors of major American orchestras. Major achievements during his tenure with the orchestra include extensive touring of the United States and abroad, critically acclaimed recordings, seven years of nationally broadcast concerts, and several televised concerts. Under Maestro Rostropovich's guidance, the orchestra has commissioned works by some of the world's most distinguished composers and has begun, with the Sidney L. Hechinger Foundation, a commissioning project designed to create new orchestral works, with special encouragement given to American composers. The first of the Hechinger Commissions, Stephen Albert's symphony *River Run*, won the 1985 Pulitzer Prize. Last spring, as a guest conductor at the Netherlands Opera, Maestro Rostropovich conducted the premiere of Alfred Schnittke's opera *Life with an Idiot*.

Mr. Rostropovich's total discography includes more than 100 recordings as conductor, cellist and pianist on every major label. His recordings have brought him the world's most coveted recording prizes, including the Grammy Award and the Grand Prix du Disque. He has recorded nearly the entire cello literature, some of it repeatedly (including the Dvorák Cello Concerto six times), as well as double and triple concertos and unaccompanied works.

Born on March 27, 1927, in Baku, a city on the west shore of the Caspian Sea, Mstislav Rostropovich began musical studies in early childhood with his parents. His mother was an accomplished pianist, and his father was a distinguished cellist who had studied with Pablo Casals. At age 16

he entered the Moscow Conservatory, where his teachers included Sergei Prokofiev and Dmitri Shostakovich; they subsequently dedicated works to him. Trained extensively as a composer, Mr. Rostropovich collaborated with Prokofiev on the 1952 version of the *Sinfonia Concertante* and completed (with Kabalevsky) Prokofiev's *Concertino*, left unfinished at the composer's death in 1953. Mr. Rostropovich taught at the Moscow Conservatory for twenty-six years and at the St. Petersburg (formerly Leningrad) Conservatory for seven.

Mstislav Rostropovich's instrumental mastery and personal friendships with other important composers have led many to dedicate works to him. Mr. Rostropovich met Benjamin Britten in 1960, after the cellist premiered the first Shostakovich concerto (1959) in London. This meeting sparked a friendship that inspired Britten to return to instrumental composition and create his Cello Symphony, Sonata for Cello and Piano, and three suites for cello and orchestra expressly for the artist. Mr. Rostropovich perpetuates the Britten legacy through his work with the Aldeburgh Festival, which the composer founded. Other composers who have written works for Rostropovich include Bernstein, Messiaen, Berio, Ginastera, Lutoslawski, Dutilleux, and Khachaturian.

Rostropovich and his family departed from what was then known as the Soviet Union in 1974, in the midst of a controversy that received international attention. From 1969 until 1973, at the invitation of Mr. Rostropovich and his wife, acclaimed soprano Galina Vishnevskaya, dissident author Alexander Solzhenitsyn lived in their dacha outside of Moscow. Their aid to him was a milestone in the history of human rights. In 1970, Rostropovich wrote an open letter to Brezhnev supporting the embattled author and protesting Soviet restrictions on cultural freedom. This action resulted in cancellations of concerts and foreign tours for Rostropovich and Vishnevskaya, a Soviet media black-out, and the cessation of all recording projects (one disc was abandoned half-completed). In 1974, Rostropovich and Vishnevskaya were finally granted exit visas; that same year, Mr. Rostropovich received the An-



nual Award of the International League of Human Rights. Four years later, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet stripped Mstislav Rostropovich and Galina Vishnevskaya of their citizenship for "acts harmful to the prestige of the U.S.S.R." After that time, the couple traveled with special passports issued from Switzerland.

On tour with the National Symphony Orchestra in February 1990, Mstislav Rostropovich returned to the former Soviet Union for the first time since 1974. His return received international attention. The Soviet Legislature restored Rostropovich's and Vishnevskaya's citizenships, twelve years after they were revoked and less than a month before Mr. Rostropovich's first Moscow concert. The report by *Tass*, the official Soviet press agency, stated that the Soviet Legislature also nullified the decree that stripped them of their medals and honorary titles. Mr. Rostropovich continued his activities as an outspoken defender of human rights during his courageous trip to Moscow – unheralded, visaless, at great risk to his life – to join those in the Russian White House resisting the attempted coup.

This afternoon, Mstislav Rostropovich makes his eleventh appearance in Ann Arbor, including five as recitalist, three as concerto soloist, and three as conductor.



Pianist **Sara Wolfensohn** is one of the most accomplished and versatile musicians of her generation. Her career has already encompassed performances with major American and European orchestras, collab-

orations with cellist Mstislav Rostropovich and numerous solo recitals both in the United States and abroad.

Among her recent engagements have been performances as guest soloist with the Milwaukee Symphony, the Montreal Symphony, the San Antonio Symphony and the Philharmonic Orchestra of Florida; recitals in Washington, DC (at Kennedy Center), Cincinnati, Memphis, Tennessee and at Caramoor, and an appearance with Vladimir Feltsman and I Musici de Montreal. During the summer of 1991, she played at Wyoming's Grand Teton Festival and gave concerts in Buenos Aires and Mexico City. She will open her 1992-1993 season performing a new piano concerto by Blas Atehortua in a series of concerts with the National Symphony Orchestra under Rostropovich.

Other career highlights for Ms. Wolfensohn have included a highly successful recital tour of Spain and performances with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and the Jerusalem Symphony during the 1988-1989 season. She has also appeared in recital with Rostropovich at the Royal Birthday Concert in England at the King's Lynn Festival. After making a successful London debut in 1985 with the Chamber Orchestra of London at the Barbican Center, Ms. Wolfensohn returned there in 1987 for three performances, which included critically acclaimed debuts with the Royal Philharmonic and with the Philharmonia Orchestra at the Royal Festival Hall.

Sara Wolfensohn has performed at Lincoln Center's Alice Tully Hall with the Tchaikovsky Chamber Orchestra and has been a frequent soloist with orchestras in Brazil, Argentina and Venezuela. She has participated in several important festivals, including the Campos do Jordao Festival and the Cape and Islands Chamber Music Festival, under the direction of Samuel Sanders.

Born in Sydney, Australia, Ms. Wolfensohn began her piano studies in London and continued them in New York, where she studied with Bella Davidovich, Samuel Sanders and Felix Galamir at The Juilliard School. This is her first UMS appearance.