

Violins of Hope project creates an unprecedented coalition of Cleveland cultural institutions



by Daniel Hathaway

What may be the largest group of Cleveland cultural institutions ever to circle their wagons around a single project will come into play this fall when Case Western Reserve University, the Cleveland Institute of Music, The Cleveland Orchestra, Facing History and Ourselves, Ideastream, the Jewish Federation of Cleveland, and the Maltz Museum of Jewish Heritage join together to present Violins of Hope Cleveland.

Four months of concerts, exhibitions, screenings, lectures, theatrical productions, and educational offerings will center around the extraordinary collection of violins amassed by Tel Aviv violinmaker Amnon Weinstein, instruments that managed to survive the Holocaust.

Weinstein, who emigrated from Eastern Europe to open a violin shop in Palestine in 1938, learned after World War II that some four hundred of his family members had perished under the Nazis. Later, he heard a heartfelt account from a survivor who had brought an instrument in for restoration of what the violin and its music had meant to Jews during

those horrific days. In 1996 — and now recognized as one of the finest violinmakers in the world — Weinstein decided to put out a call for Holocaust-era violins. To date, he has restored nearly fifty such instruments to playing condition, a collection he dubbed “Violins of Hope.”



Those instruments have already been heard in concerts in London, Paris, Rome, Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, and Berlin. This month, eighteen of Weinstein’s violins and one from another collection will journey to Cleveland to go on display at the Maltz Museum and to be involved in an amazing series of concerts, the first of which will feature The Cleveland Orchestra under Franz Welser-Möst on Sunday, September 27. That already sold-out event will also inaugurate the new Milton and Tamar Maltz Performing Arts Center at Case Western Reserve University.

A press conference at the Maltz Museum on August 28 traced the evolution of Violins of Hope Cleveland. Cleveland Orchestra chairman Richard J. Bogomolny and Maltz Museum Founder Milton Maltz spoke about the early stages of the idea of bringing the violins to Cleveland and their success in lining up partners for the project, a process which came together in the short space of three weeks. CWRU president Barbara R. Snyder talked about the decision to hold the opening concert in the new Maltz Performing Arts Center, which was formerly the Sanctuary of The Temple-Tifereth Israel. Mark Swaim-Fox of the Cleveland office of Facing History and Ourselves detailed the vast range of educational activities for adults and children which will center around the Violins. Some twenty Northeast Ohio organizations will offer programs and events during the four-month period.

The Violins themselves — eighteen from Weinstein’s collection and one from Yad Vashem, the World Center for Documentation, Research, Education, and Commemoration of the Holocaust — will be on display at the Maltz Museum from Friday, October 2 through Sunday, January 3, 2016 in a special, multisensory installation featuring circular pods and dramatic lighting. But since violins need to be played, the instruments will sing out on a regular basis in the hands of students from CIM and Baldwin Wallace.



The instruments will also be played by Cleveland Orchestra members and soloist Shlomo Mintz in the September 27 concert, which will include the Mendelssohn concerto, Schoenberg’s *Kol Nidre* with narrator Thomas Hampson, and Beethoven’s Overture to *The Creatures of Prometheus*, as well as his *Leonore Overture No. 3*. The concert will be broadcast live on WVIZ/PBS and WCLV, 104.9 FM and streamed live on ideastream.org at 3:00 pm and broadcast on WVIZ/PBS Friday, October 2 at 9:00 pm and Sunday, October 4 at 3:00 pm.

Other concerts scheduled at the Cleveland Institute of Music, Anshe Chesed Fairmount Temple, Park Synagogue, the Maltz Museum, and Ideastream will feature CIM faculty, the Cleveland Women’s Orchestra, the Imani Temple Ministries Choir and the Greenman/Rushefsky Duo in programs ranging from music by Holocaust composers to Klezmer music, songs of resistance from the era of slavery, a commemoration of the

women's orchestra at Auschwitz, a Klezmer band of Holocaust survivors, and the world premiere of a new work by David Shimotakahara for Groundworks Dance Theatre.



Architect's drawing of the Maltz Performing Arts Center (CWRU)

Among the planned educational programs are seven early December concerts for Grades 6-12 by The Cleveland Orchestra (Brett Mitchell, conducting) in collaboration with CWRU and the Cleveland Play House MFA program.

Amnon Weinstein himself will be on hand for conversations with Rabbi Roger Klein (September 25), Shlomo Mintz (September 28), Eric Kisch (September 30), and James A. Grymes (October 4). Grymes is the author of *Violins of Hope: Violins of the Holocaust — Instruments of Hope and Liberation in Mankind's Darkest Hour*, and will share some of the poignant stories behind the violins.

A complete list of events appears on the Violins of Hope Cleveland [website](#). Read an article by Steven Litt about the new Maltz Performing Arts Center [here](#).

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