



During the post-war years his interests turned to the performance and recording of chamber music, much of it in trio. Among his regular accompanists were pianist Arthur Rubinstein and Gregor Piatigorsky on the cello. In 1950, the trio was heard on Tchaikovsky's Trio in A Minor, Mendelssohn's Trio in D Minor, Schubert's Trio in B-flat, and Ravel's Trio in A Minor. Heifetz recorded many hours of beloved music during that era and turned his talents to teaching as well. He joined the staff of the music department at the University of Southern California and embraced the rising new media of radio and television. Among his media presentations he prepared a series of master classes for television audiences in 1952. Later during the 1950s he assisted in screening young musicians for a New York radio series called "Musical Talent in Our Schools," and on December 9, 1959, he performed before the United Nations in New York.

As the 1950s drew to a close, Heifetz gradually eased his intensive performance schedule. He took sabbaticals from time to time and made time for other escapes from the concert halls. He was named as the Regents Professor of Music at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) and served as the artist in residence during the late 1950s. In 1961, he taught master classes at the University of Southern California (USC) and was joined in this pursuit by his long-time trio partners, violist William Primrose and cellist Piatigorsky.

Heifetz performed a final farewell concert in Los Angeles on October 23, 1972. He continued his academic involvement and recorded for RCA as well. A shoulder operation in 1975 brought an end to the recording sessions, but he expressed no regret and continued to teach, primarily at USC, despite severe arthritic pain. In 1975, RCA Records, in an unprecedented tribute to the retired Heifetz, issued a comprehensive collection of 24 records containing virtually every recording he ever made. The collection spanned Heifetz's career with RCA, from 1917 to 1965. In 1977, the record label released six additional platters of Heifetz chamber music.

People and Politics

Heifetz lived an intensely private life away from the concert stage. He became a naturalized citizen of the United States in 1925. On August 20, 1928 he married the silent film actress, Florence Vidor. They had two children, Josepha and Robert, and divorced in 1945. Heifetz established his permanent residence in California and enjoyed an affluent lifestyle. He played tennis and was particularly fond of sailing. His sailboat, which he named the "Serenade," was one of his joys. His fondness for books led him to collect first edition volumes. In January 1947, Heifetz married Frances Spiegelberg. They had one son, Joseph (called Jay), and divorced in 1963.

As a young man, Heifetz explored other creative outlets. Cameras intrigued him. He also owned his own company, which distributed lamps designed by the virtuoso himself. In 1937, he joined the new American Federation of Radio Artists as a charter member. He served as a vice-president of the organization under vaudevillian, Eddie Cantor. Heifetz also joined the American Guild of Musical Artists and fought with that group to prevent non-members from performing in major entertainment venues. Heifetz created a stir and was physically attacked in 1953, following a performance in Jerusalem, when a Jewish man became irate over Heifetz's performance of a violin sonata by Richard Strauss. Heifetz himself incited the incident through his apparent disregard for an Israeli national ban (since repealed) against the public performance of the works of German composers.

Heifetz received many distinguished honors during his life. In 1949, he was awarded an honorary doctorate of musicology from Northwestern University, and in 1957 he was given membership in the prestigious French Legion of Honor. He also received a Grammy Award from the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences.

Late in October 1987, Heifetz developed complications from a fall and was hospitalized at the Cedars-Sinai Medical Center where he died on December 10. His three children and younger sister, Elza Behrman, survived him. Upon his death, Schonberg whimsically dubbed Heifetz the "great stone face," and paid tribute in an obituary to the "playing machine." Conductor Erich Leinsdorf called Heifetz "nonpareil."



HEIFETZ

*Bruch
Concerto in G Minor*

*Mozart
Concerto in D Major*

*New Symphony Orchestra of London
Malcolm Sargent*

Jascha Heifetz (1901-1987) was widely acknowledged as the greatest violinist of the 20th century. Critics repeatedly voiced agreement that the "satin tones" of his music approached perfection in both expression and intonation.

With a delicately controlled vibrato and inspired musical interpretations, Jascha Heifetz attracted audiences in numbers rarely seen before or since. He first created an international stir when he toured Europe during his early adolescence. By the age of 16 he had performed a solo concert at Carnegie Hall. Although scores of recordings remain as a testament to his great talent, his death in Los Angeles, at the age of 86, left the world of music in mourning over the loss of his "silken bow."

Jascha Heifetz was born in the Lithuanian capital of Vilna (Vilnius) on February 2, 1901. He was one of three children—and the only son—of Ruvin (Rubin) and Anna Heifetz. Ruvin Heifetz, a violinist and concertmaster of the Vilna Symphony Orchestra, introduced his son to the violin at the age of three. Within a year, young Heifetz had learned seven different finger positions and was able to play the Kayser etudes, an advanced series of exercises. His parents sent him to the Royal School of Music where he studied under Ilya Davidovitch Malkin and completed the conservatory program within three years. Picture perfect in a blue velvet Lord Fauntelroy suit, replete with lace collar and cuffs, Heifetz performed in concert repeatedly, from the age of five years old. After some persuasion, he obtained an audition with the esteemed violinist, Leopold Auer. Despite his initial reluctance to hear Heifetz, Auer acknowledged the boy's genius and accepted Heifetz as a private student. Following a significant performance in St. Petersburg under Auer's direction, Heifetz went on to perform in Germany with the Berlin Philharmonic in 1911. He then toured Europe and, by the age of 12, his reputation as a prodigy preceded him. On one occasion, when the adolescent Heifetz was on tour in Berlin, he had the honor to meet one of his contemporaries, violinist Fritz Kreisler. Kreisler had heard of Heifetz and insisted that the boy play for him. Heifetz obliged and the impromptu performance solicited Kreisler's highly publicized comment that he and his colleagues (violinists) might as well, "all now break our violins across our knees."

When Heifetz first performed for an American audience at Carnegie Hall in 1916, critics applauded the unparalleled talent of the 16-year-old genius. Many years later, Harold C. Schonberg, music critic for the New York Times, cited Heifetz's playing: "its silken tone, technical perfection, regard for the composers' slightest markings, aristocratic spirit; its lyricism was intense, and the elegance and purity of phrasing, always remarkable." Schonberg stated further that, "Most of these characteristics were already evident at Mr. Heifetz's New York debut [in 1916]."

In 1920, Heifetz toured much of the world. He traveled even to remote areas of the South Pacific where a violin was never seen before. Overall, he traveled two million miles during the peak of his young career. He habitually performed to sell-out crowds. In 1922, when he returned to Carnegie Hall for a series of four concerts, a melee ensued among would-be spectators who were unable to obtain tickets for the sold-out

performances. They attempted to force their way into the auditorium, and the New York City police were summoned to quell the uproar.

Heifetz performed with a Tononi violin until an appreciative admirer loaned him a Stradivarius. He was honored to use the instrument and, in 1937, purchased it outright. Later in his career he purchased a 1742 Guarnerius del Gesu violin that once belonged to Ferdinand David, the 19th century virtuoso and concertmaster of the Leipzig Gewandhaus. The David Guarnerius, as the violin was known, at one time belonged to another great violinist, Wilhelmj. Heifetz habitually carried a double violin case in which he stored both the Guarnerius and the Stradivarius. He kept his violin case very near to him at virtually all times. Heifetz also kept more than one-half dozen bows—including a prized Kittel bow that he received as a gift from Auer. Heifetz performed impeccably and, according to Dr. Herbert R. Axelrod, his playing "established a completely new set of standards for violin playing." Second only to Heifetz's reputation for perfection, was his reputation as a stoic. During a performance he was rarely seen to smile or reveal any emotion. Heifetz learned such behavior from his father, who taught that the violin, when played properly, could express all the emotion of the music. Facial expressions and other mannerisms were superfluous to a competent violinist, or so Ruvin Heifetz instructed. Audiences marveled at Heifetz's ability to remain motionless during a performance, except for the exaggerated ebb of his bow arm and the delicate glide of his fingers on the strings. Even his vibrato technique was controlled and contained. He accomplished this feat without visible movement of his arm or wrist, employing only a subtle movement of his fingers to produce incomparably smooth tones. Even in his rare cinema appearances, Heifetz emoted only through his instrument and rarely flinched. In time, film directors of his day came to accept that Heifetz was not an actor but was indeed the world's greatest violinist. A brochure that accompanied the first RCA Victor recording of Heifetz in 1917 described his "innate musicianship," and declared that, "He is playing as Mozart might have played, because the stream of consciousness within him is a fountain of music, and his violin is spokesman of his dreams." The brochure declared of Heifetz's recording of the Schubert Ave Maria, "Nothing more exquisite can be imagined than the tone of that spiritual ecstasy." The reviewer described likewise a "silvery gloss" that emanated from Heifetz's Scherzo-Tarantelle.

An Established Virtuoso

The Heifetz discography grew lengthy over the years. He recorded the Bach Sonatas and Partita unaccompanied in 1935 and again in 1952. That same year pianist Emmanuel Bay accompanied Heifetz in his recording of the Beethoven Sonatas. Some years earlier, during the 1940s, Heifetz and Bay performed a variety of contemporary favorites including "Deep River," "White Christmas," "Claire de Lune," and "Humoresque." Also during the Great Depression and war years Heifetz composed contemporary tunes in keeping with the times. Under the pseudonym of Jim Hoyle he wrote "tin-pan alley" ditties such as "When You Make Love to Me-Don't Make Believe." During the Second World War he toured army camps and performed overseas for the soldiers.

HEIFETZ

Bruch Concerto in G Minor

Mozart Concerto in D Major

*New Symphony Orchestra of London
Malcolm Sargent*

Transferred from RCA 4-track tape Date of Recording: 1963
Recorded in England Producer: Eric Smith - Engineer: Kenneth Wilkinson

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