



JASON AUGUSTINE/PMC

MY HAMPTONS

TOBY PERLMAN

Virtuoso
Educator
East Hamptonite

Who would have thought that in a quiet community like Shelter Island, beautiful music is made every summer? The Perlman Music Program has been teaching gifted young musicians for 25 years, and virtuosos Itzhak and Toby Perlman are at its very heart. Toby Perlman reflects on the Perlman Music Program's remarkable run on the East End and looks forward to its bright future.

BTH: Congratulations on 25 years of the Perlman Music Program! That's incredible.

TP: It really is shocking, I must say. It feels like yesterday.

BTH: So why choose Shelter Island for the Perlman Music Program?

TP: Good question. Well, in the first couple of years we had a short program—it was two weeks—and we rented space. And the space was inadequate because we didn't have enough practice facilities, we didn't have the stage. It was very difficult, but we did it. After a couple of years, we thought, "We really need to do something about this. We need to find some space." And we had a very sweet, generous offer from the Lauder family, who had a property that they were willing to give us in Wainscott or Sagaponack, I don't remember. The people in the neighborhood didn't like the idea of having a music facility around them. I, at the time, was not in favor of it either because I felt...I don't know much about money, but I know that building is just a fortune and we didn't have any money. And it was one of these fluke, lucky moments in life where a friend of a faculty member was visiting Shelter Island for a weekend and she passed by the Peconic Lodge, which had a sign outside—something for sale. She called this faculty member and she said, "Listen, I've just seen the perfect property for the Perlman Music Program. You have to act on it right away." So we did. We went and we looked and we thought, "Yes, this is perfection for us." And then we had to raise the money. And we did it. Right then and there, we did it. We bought the property. We had to make a few repairs. I mean, now we've been on Shelter Island for quite some time and we've done a lot of things. Luckily, we can do it

at our own pace and we don't have to put the program in jeopardy. We can save up our pennies and then do something major. So it was just fortuitous; it is the perfect place for us. From every point of view, we have their little cabins for practicing, their dormitories already in place. We don't have a concert hall, and we put up a tent every summer. It's exorbitantly expensive, but we do it. So, lucky us.

BTH: During the program do you live on Shelter Island, as well?

TP: No, no. We commute every day. We have a cabin. My husband has a studio and a couple of rooms. We thought initially that we would stay overnight, but I don't know. It's complicated with the dogs and the grandchildren so we make the trip.

BTH: How long have you lived in East Hampton?

TP: I think we moved into this house when our oldest child was 18, and he's 50. So what is that—32 years? That's right, because my youngest was in diapers, and she's 35 so it works out.

BTH: As a musician, what do you think it is about the East End that makes it so special?

TP: Recently, we were in Southold. We sang, the orchestra played, we had a Q&A. And I said to the audience that we look forward to it all year because the Southold audience is absolutely fantastic. They ask the most intelligent questions...it is special. I don't know if it's just that they're starved for music, or whether somehow they're super-sophisticated. I don't get it. We fill the hall every summer—it's packed. It's an interesting phenomenon.

Continued on page 48

MY HAMPTONS



ANNIE WATT

The Perlmans have taught gifted young musicians for 25 years

BTH: What are some of your places to go and enjoy in the Hamptons?

TP: We eat at [the program]. Most days we have lunch there, as well. We don't go to any restaurants, we don't do anything. The chamber music workshop begins usually in May. We go straight through and we basically don't go anywhere—that's the truth. The Perlman Music Program is all-consuming in the summer. My husband doesn't travel in the summer until after camp. This year, for example, two days after camp he goes to Chicago and plays for three days there. Last year after camp, he went to the Hollywood Bowl, but he doesn't tour. It's just the Perlman Music Program.

BTH: What would you say is the most fulfilling part of teaching these young musicians?

TP: For me, there's a lot in this package that is very appealing, and I suppose the most exciting apart about it is watching—over a period of years—watching young artists develop and become their best selves in the way they play and also of what kind of people they are—they tend to become. I don't know what magic we spray over them or sprinkle over them, but I say this every year: this group, this summer, is so adorable. They're kind and sweet to one another, it's very nice—very unusual. I don't know how it happens, because we don't know these kids before they come to us. They send DVDs, the faculty choose the players they want. It's not as if we were asking for recommendations or we're interviewing kids. Not at all. They're strangers. A lot of them are repeaters, but a lot of them are also strangers. They're all strangers at a certain point, and I don't know whether we get lucky, whether there is something magical that we

doing—I don't think so, I don't think we can take any credit—but it's very exciting to watch them grow artistically.

BTH: Where do you see the culture of music on the East End going in the future?

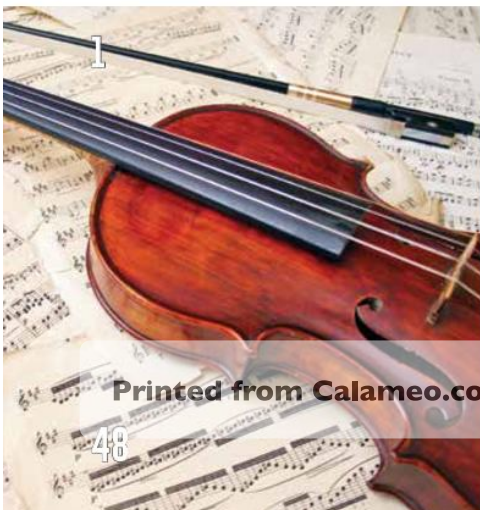
TP: Look, I don't know. In Southold, there were almost no empty seats. The public state was a long program and a very sophisticated program. It's not pandering—this is serious stuff. Nobody moved, nobody talked. Now, if you take that—if you want to use that as an average audience, I think it's a pretty good situation. In Shelter Island, we pretty much fill our tent every weekend, Friday and Saturday night. We have people come for rehearsals. The Shelter Island audience has become very sophisticated over the years. In the beginning they weren't. They didn't know when to clap, but it's very different now. I think it bodes well for music on the East End. I don't have any statistics, it's just a feeling that I have. But if you give people high quality stuff, they respond.

BTH: Over the years, what would you say is your proudest moment with the Perlman Music Program?

TP: Every moment. I'm serious—I mean like last night, we sang. And we did the best we can—nobody is a singer, and that's one of the reasons we do it. It's a musical activity that's non-competitive, that everybody who is on campus participates in every day. We sang some Beethoven and some Bach, and it was very good. But they played, and they sounded just fantastic. It's just amazing how that happens. Can I say it's my proudest moment? Well, until tomorrow. Things happen all the time.

— Lee Meyer

1. Toby Perlman makes beautiful music 2. A symphony is but a ferry ride away 3. Maestro Itzhak Perlman with the baton



Printed from Calameo.com

VOLUME VII / ISSUE 6 / AUGUST 16, 2019

HEDGES

BEHIND THE

HAMPTONS REAL ESTATE & LIFESTYLE...STEP INSIDE

ECLECTIC ENVIRONS

Giant Heads, Sex and The City and Imaginative Interiors In Montauk

GET US TO THE GREEK

Why The Greek Revival Took Hold On The East End

PLUS: TOBY PERLMAN, OUTRAGEOUS OPEN HOUSES,
SUPERLATIVE SILVERSMITH AND MORE

Printed from Calameo.com

BEHINDTHEHEDGES.COM