



November 20, 2008, 8:00pm on PBS
Shaham @ the Penthouse



As the year 2008 draws to a close, our next Live From Lincoln Center will observe an important musical milestone that otherwise has gone virtually unnoticed: the 100th anniversary of the death of the virtuoso violinist and composer, Pablo de Sarasate. On Thursday evening, November 20, in the intimate space of Lincoln Center's Stanley H. Kaplan Penthouse, virtuoso violinist Gil Shaham, the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra and pianist Jonathan Feldman will offer a panoramic survey of the music of Sarasate.

Born in 1844, Sarasate is perhaps the most famous citizen of the Spanish city of Pamplona, known otherwise for the annual July ritual of the Running of the Bulls. His father, a military bandmaster, recognized a special musical talent in his son and became his first violin teacher. The young Sarasate played his first public concert at the age of 8. By the time he was 17, he had completed a course of study at the Paris Conservatoire and had won the highest honor in a competition there. There followed a dizzying career as Sarasate criss-crossed Europe, North and South America. Several cornerstones of the violin repertory were written for and dedicated to him: Wieniawski's Violin Concerto No. 2; Lalo's *Symphonie Espagnole*; Saint Saëns' Third Violin Concerto and Introduction and Rondo Capriccioso; and Bruch's *Scottish Fantasy*.

Not restricting his musical life to the role of performer, Sarasate also composed more than 50 pieces for violin, most of them for his own programs on the concert stage. Some – like *Jota aragonesa*, and *La chase* – have a permanent place in the repertory for violin and piano. In addition, at least two of his works for violin and orchestra, *Zigeunerweisen* and *Fantasy on Carmen*, have remained favorites of violinists and audiences from the day of their creation. A varied selection of Sarasate's music will be heard on our next Live From Lincoln Center presentation.

We know George Bernard Shaw as a sovereign playwright, whose most famous work is "Pygmalion". But at an earlier stage in his life Shaw was a music critic in London. After hearing Sarasate play some of his own compositions, Shaw wrote that there were many composers who wrote music for the violin, but few who composed violin music. Shaw obviously placed Sarasate in the latter group. And an indication of the renown which Sarasate had achieved is the fact that in one of Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories, Holmes (himself an amateur violinist) and Dr. Watson attend a concert by Sarasate.

The Kaplan Penthouse at New York's Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts is a particularly congenial environment for a violin recital: it has already served Live From Lincoln Center as the locale for performances by Itzhak Perlman and Joshua Bell. Gil Shaham was the obvious and inevitable choice as violinist for this tribute to Sarasate. Gil's Israeli parents made worldwide reputations as scientists, and Gil was born in Champagne-Urbana, Illinois in February, 1971, while his parents were on a three-year academic assignment at the University of Illinois. The family moved back to Israel before Gil was 2, and it was there that his musical training began. By the time he was 11, he was admitted to Lincoln Center's Juilliard School where he studied with the legendary Dorothy DeLay.

His 1989 arrival on the international scene came about – as so many do – as the last-minute substitute for an ailing colleague, in this instance Itzhak Perlman. With Michael Tilson Thomas conducting the London

Symphony Orchestra, 18-year old Gil Shaham played the Bruch G Minor and Sibelius Concertos. The result was instant fame! Since then, of course, he has become one of the most heralded and sought-after violinists on the concert stage. On an earlier appearance in our Live From Lincoln Center series he played the Sibelius Concerto with the New York Philharmonic conducted by his brother-in-law, David Robertson.

Put a reminder on your calendars for this special musical treat: Shaham @ the Penthouse on Live From Lincoln Center, Thursday evening, November 20 for a program commemorating the 100th anniversary of the death of Pablo de Sarasate. Appearing along with violinist Gil Shaham will be his wife, Adele Anthony (an accomplished concert violinist in her own right), the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra and pianist Jonathan Feldman. As an added treat, soprano Renée Fleming will host. Be sure to check your local PBS station for the exact date and time of the telecast in your area.

Enjoy!

By MARTIN BOOKSPAN