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## **Itzhak Perlman: A Citizen of the World, With His Violin as a Passport**



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STEVE EMBER: Many consider him the greatest concert violinist in the world. The music of Itzhak Perlman is our program today on the VOA Special English program THIS IS AMERICA. I'm Steve Ember.

(MUSIC)

Itzhak Perlman was born in Tel Aviv, in what was then Palestine, in nineteen forty-five. Today he lives in New York City. But his music has made him a citizen of the world. He has played in almost every major city.

He has won many Grammy awards for his recordings. He has also won Emmy awards for his work on television.

Itzhak Perlman suffered from polio at the age of four. The disease damaged his legs. He uses a wheelchair or walks with the aid of crutches on his arms.

(MUSIC)

But none of this stopped him from playing the violin. He began as a young child. He took his first lessons at the Music Academy of Tel Aviv. Very quickly, his teachers recognized that he had a special gift.

At thirteen he went to the United States to appear on television. His playing earned him the financial aid to attend the Juilliard School in New York.

In nineteen sixty-four Itzhak Perlman won the Leventritt Competition in that city. His international fame had begun.

(MUSIC)

His music is full of power and strength. It can be sad or joyful, loud or soft. But critics say it is not the music alone that makes his playing so special. They say he is able to communicate the joy he feels in playing, and the emotions that great music can deliver.

Anyone who has attended a performance by Itzhak Perlman will tell you that it is exciting to watch him play. His face changes as the music from his violin changes.

He looks sad when the music seems sad. He smiles and closes his eyes when the music is light and happy. He often looks dark and threatening when the music seems dark and threatening.

In nineteen-eighty six, President Ronald Reagan honored Itzhak Perlman with a Medal of Liberty. In two-thousand, President Bill Clinton awarded him the National Medal of Arts. Several major universities have awarded him honors. He continues to receive honors for his music.

(MUSIC)

Today, Itzhak Perlman is also busy leading orchestras. He appears on television. He teaches young musicians. He has worked with most of the top young violinists. He has recorded every major work for the violin, and has also recorded jazz, ragtime and Jewish folk music.

Years ago a reporter asked Itzhak Perlman why he did not play the Violin Concerto in D Major by Beethoven. He answered that he would play it when he had more experience. He has since played it and recorded it several times.

For a few moments, close your eyes and imagine you are in a theater. In front of us is the stage. To the left, Itzhak Perlman sits in his chair, near the conductor. The orchestra has already played the first two movements of Beethoven's D

Major Concerto. The violin leads us to the third, and immediately announces the major theme.

Listen now as Itzhak Perlman performs with the Philharmonia Orchestra of London. Carlo Maria Giulini is the conductor.

(MUSIC)

Our program was written and produced by Paul Thompson. I'm Steve Ember. Join us again next week for the VOA Special English program THIS IS AMERICA.