World-acclaimed violinist, educator, and activist, Isaac Stern was an American icon. With 2020 marking the centenary of his birth, Carnegie Hall dedicates its entire 2019–2020 season in his honor in gratitude for his tireless work in saving the Hall from demolition in 1960 and for his aspirations for what the illustrious concert hall would mean to future generations.

In March 2020, pianist Emanuel Ax, violinist Leonidas Kavakos, and cellist Yo-Yo Ma perform three all-Beethoven chamber music evenings as part of Carnegie Hall’s season-long Beethoven 250th birthday celebration. These performances also commemorate the 50th anniversary of a historic series of concerts performed by Isaac Stern with pianist Eugene Istomin and cellist Leonard Rose at Carnegie Hall in 1970 in celebration of Beethoven’s 200th anniversary. The trio’s third concert on Sunday, March 8, 2020, has been designated as The Annual Isaac Stern Memorial Concert for the season.

Also in spring 2020, Carnegie Hall’s Weill Music Institute pays tribute to Mr. Stern with a free Family Day on the Lily and Edmond J. Safra Education Floors of Carnegie Hall’s Judith and Burton Resnick Education Wing, with a variety of interactive activities for families to explore the world of strings in various musical genres. In fall 2020, violinists of all ages are invited to bring their instruments to Stern Auditorium / Perelman Stage for a special “Violin Day,” a free event for families, students, and music lovers. Celebrated violinist Midori, a protégée of Mr. Stern, along with other leading artists, host this unique opportunity for the entire audience to make music together at Carnegie Hall.

Visitors to Carnegie Hall are invited to explore the life and legacy of Isaac Stern through a spring 2020 exhibit in the Hall’s Rose Museum. Throughout the season, music lovers worldwide will learn more through engaging digital content featured online.
Recognized worldwide as one of the foremost violinists of the 20th century, Isaac Stern had a 58-year history at Carnegie Hall, appearing on stage more than 200 times, including more than 180 performances as a violinist. He made his Carnegie Hall debut on January 8, 1943, in a solo recital with pianist Alexander Zakin, and made his final appearance on February 27, 2000, in a performance with pianist Emanuel Ax, violinist Jaime Laredo, and cellist Yo-Yo Ma. For the close to six decades in between, Mr. Stern appeared at Carnegie Hall with the world’s major symphony orchestras as well as the most celebrated artists of the day. In 1997, Carnegie Hall’s largest performance venue was dedicated to him as the Isaac Stern Auditorium. In 2003, the City of New York renamed the corner of West 57th Street and Seventh Avenue as Isaac Stern Place.

Passionately dedicated to mentoring younger musicians, Mr. Stern is credited with supporting the early careers of great artists, including Emanuel Ax, Yo-Yo Ma, Midori, Itzhak Perlman, and Pinchas Zukerman. He was renowned for his worldwide educational activism; one of the most striking results was the creation of a series of Professional Training Workshops at Carnegie Hall, designed to prepare younger performers to aspire to the highest performance standards—the forerunner of the workshops and master classes presented today by Carnegie Hall’s Weill Music Institute. In 1993, Mr. Stern also introduced the Isaac Stern Chamber Music Workshop, an intensive two-week seminar at the Hall, where he and a distinguished faculty of world-renowned chamber artists coached diverse groups of international ensembles. These workshops occurred at Carnegie Hall every second year (with seminars taking place in Jerusalem during the alternate years). Looking to the community, he also was an enthusiastic standard bearer for music education in New York City public schools.

Mr. Stern’s advocacy for Carnegie Hall was unparalleled. In 1960, he and his wife, Vera, stepped forward and together galvanized civic leaders, politicians, and philanthropists, leading a campaign to save the Hall from demolition by convincing city leaders that Carnegie Hall had a place as a national center for teaching music and developing young artists. He was named the first-ever president of Carnegie Hall that same year. Mr. Stern was instrumental in energizing Carnegie Hall’s initial fundraising efforts, and later was central in the campaigns to restore the Hall in 1986 and to celebrate its centennial in 1991. A tenacious advocate for the arts on the national and international stages, Mr. Stern’s work as one of the founders of the National Endowment for the Arts and as chairman of the America-Israel Cultural Foundation earned him accolades, including the Presidential Medal of Freedom—the US’s highest civilian honor—and the Albert Schweitzer Music Award for “a life dedicated to music and devoted to humanity.” Until his death in 2001, he remained a committed believer in the power of music, and Carnegie Hall’s mission as a leading institution presenting great music and promoting education around the world.