

RETHINKING  
CONCERT DRESS

2023  
BUYER'S GUIDE

LEARN TO PLAY  
THE WALTZ

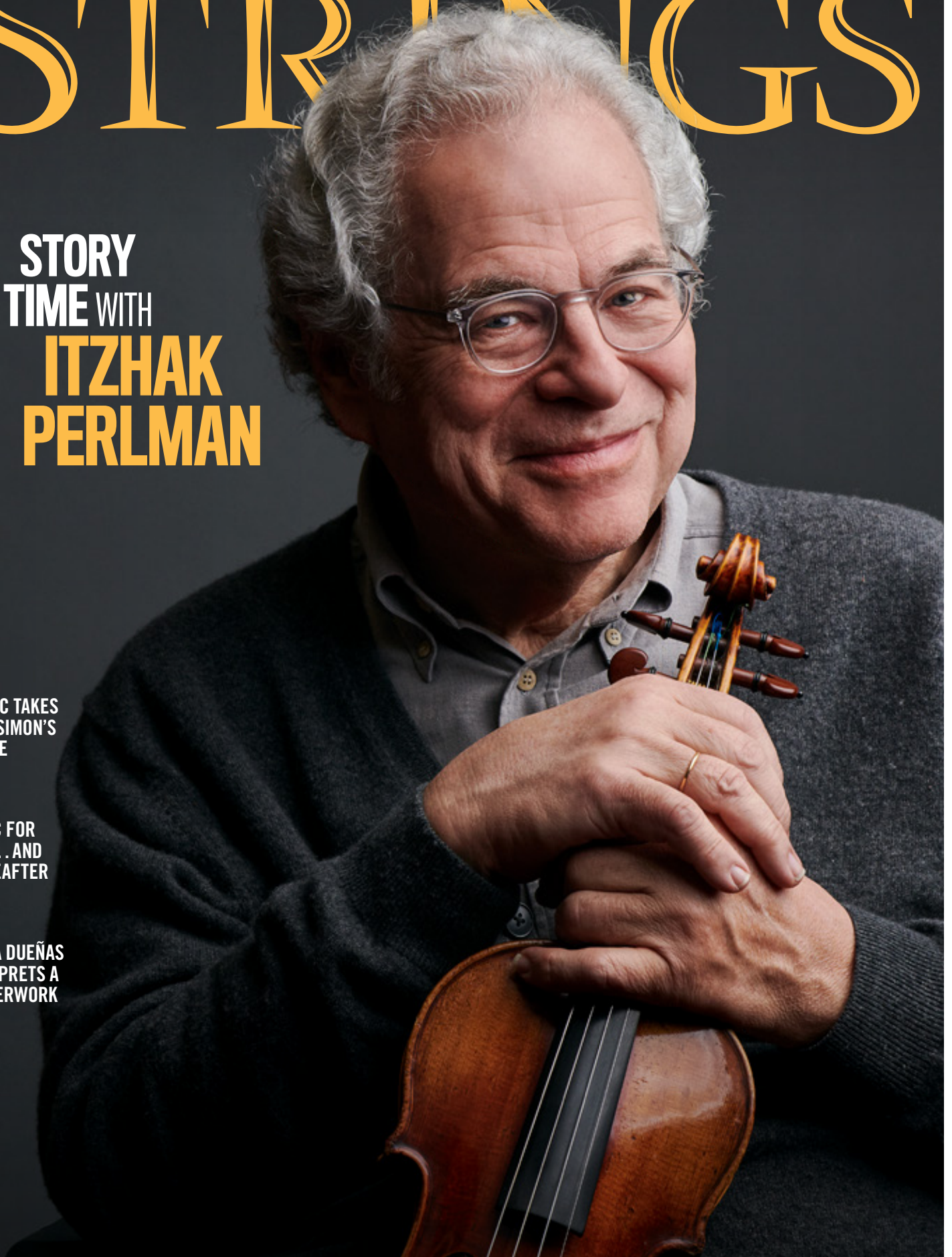
# STRINGS

STORY  
TIME WITH  
**ITZHAK  
PERLMAN**

—  
MUSIC TAKES  
PAUL SIMON'S  
ADVICE

—  
MUSIC FOR  
LIFE... AND  
THEREAFTER

—  
MARÍA DUEÑAS  
INTERPRETS A  
MASTERWORK





COURTESY OF MOUNT AUBURN CEMETERY

Mary Bichner Spring Suite concert at Mount Auburn Cemetery

Massachusetts, whose artist residency program was started in 2014 and is billed as the first of its kind in the US.

“We try to make this an inspiring, beautiful place, and never tied to anything spooky or involving ghosts,” says Jessica Bussmann, Mount Auburn’s director of education and visitor services. One of this year’s resident artists is Eden Rayz, a Boston-based cellist, composer, and singer who has fronted the death metal bands Angel Grinder and Scaphism. Her project will involve reconstructing a pipe organ that was recently removed from the cemetery’s chapel into a new instrument “which will be played like a gamelan,” according to a description.

### Garden Cemeteries Favor Outdoor Activities

Mount Auburn is considered the first garden cemetery in early 19th-century America. These spaces were created in response to the overcrowded, often unsanitary conditions in urban churchyard burial grounds and took inspiration from Père Lachaise, the Parisian “city of the dead,” developed in 1804. “Wealthy Americans were traveling in Europe, and they got wind of this idea in England and France,” says Goss of Lake View. “The idea was to get the dead out of the city and make a beautiful garden out of it. The cemeteries were also a place for the living.

Yes, you could bury someone, but in a beautiful setting where families could gather after church on Sunday and have a picnic.”

The new urban escapes were filled with hills, dells, creeks, bird-filled trees, and magnificent statues, and thus represented a more pastoral and comforting side of death. They took on a significant role in Victorian society and were even considered tourist attractions. A British visitor to Boston in the 1850s wrote, “Cemeteries here are all the ‘rage.’ People lounge in them and use them (as their tastes are inclined) for walking, making love, weeping, sentimentalizing, and everything, in short.”

While early visitors came to read poetry or take carriage rides, by the mid-20th century, patriotic concerts and flag placement ceremonies were staged around Memorial Day and Veteran’s Day. The 21st century has brought more freewheeling approaches. John Luther Adams’s *Inuksuit*, an outdoor work for up to 99 percussionists, was staged at Lake View in 2014, with listeners invited to move around freely and discover their own listening points.

Lake View’s Goss stresses that concerts don’t take place during funerals, and spooky, supernatural themes are avoided. She also avoids Halloween. “That’s where I say, ‘You know what, Halloween is everywhere,’” she says. “And it’s a commercial, silly thing. You

don’t need to come to Lake View for Halloween.” But other venues embrace the holiday. In London, Kensal Green and Brompton Cemeteries have hosted performances by Gothic Opera, an enterprising troupe that specializes in works on supernatural and fantastical subjects, among them Heinrich Marschner’s opera *Der Vampyr* and Pauline Viardot’s *Le dernier sorcier*.

Cemetery officials often say that they carefully avoid sales pitches for burial plots during concerts, and in some cases, such as Green-Wood Cemetery, space is limited regardless (single graves there begin at \$21,000). But concerts do prompt inquiries about longer-term stays. “We’re not dancing on top of people’s graves,” Harry J. Weil, Green-Wood’s vice president of education and public programs, told me for a 2021 article. “We’re very respectful of people buried here, whether they were buried 200 years ago or last year. But we have to keep people coming. Many cemeteries across the country get forgotten, or fall into disrepair if they don’t stay vital.”

The gregarious Goss describes her approach as relationship building. “Hopefully we’ll have another chance to be in front of them,” she says. “And the more times they have a chance to be with us, the more they’re not going to want to go other places, because other cemeteries aren’t like us.” ■