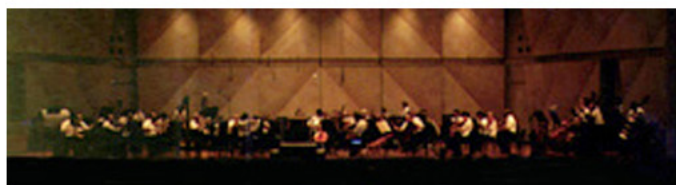


8 PM WEDNESDAY AUGUST 26 1998 PAVILION

CHICAGO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

ASHER FISCH, *Conductor*
YO-YO MA, *Cello*

- DVORAK **Symphonic Variations, Opus 78**
- BLOCH **Schelomo: Hebraic Rhapsody**
Yo-Yo Ma
- Intermission
- STRAUSS **Don Quixote: Fantastic Variations on a Theme of**
Knightly Character, Opus 35
Introduction
Thema
Variations I-X
Finale
Yo-Yo Ma
Charles Pikler, Viola



Cellist Ma sweeps challenges aside

By John von Rhein
TRIBUNE MUSIC CRITIC

There is no better medicine for a summer festival's box office during the dog days of summer, it would appear, than Yo-Yo Ma.

The American cellist, who treated audiences downtown last season to everything from the complete Bach cello suites to Astor Piazzolla tangos, again

Classical review

demonstrated his extraordinary drawing power Wednesday at Ravinia, where he performed with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra under Asher Fisch.

Triumphantly refuting the notion that he might be overexposed locally, Ma packed the pavilion and drew a cheek-to-jowl lawn crowd any pop impresario would envy.

The Ravinia throng in turn rewarded him with prolonged applause after his performances of Ernest Bloch's "Schelomo" and Richard Strauss' "Don Quixote"—a formidable cello double-header if there ever was one, but the sort of challenge that brings out the very best in Ma; indeed, with both works he seemed to be as much living the music as recreating it. How other cello virtuosi must envy his total dedication, a dedication that makes his performances sound ever fresh and spontaneous, never cut and dried.

In the Bloch Hebraic rhapsody (1917), Ma's opening solo spoke eloquently, as from the very



Yo-Yo Ma's double-header of "Chelomo" and "Don Quixote" conquered the night at Ravinia.

depths of the score's melancholy soul. Later he summoned an intensity of tone and feeling that pointed each climax in a way that rescued the music from its own portentous rhetoric (so prescient of the scores that were to accompany Hollywood's biblical epics some 50 years later). And his handling of the final pages proved as moving as one could wish, full of rapt lyrical tenderness.

Under the Jerusalem-born Fisch, who was making his Ravinia and CSO debuts, the swirling orchestral refrains carried the stern authority of an Old Testament prophet laying down divine law. Ma is nothing if not an impetuous, emotional performer, but the conductor responded flexibly to

every musical move.

That much was also true of their deeply satisfying account of "Don Quixote." Fisch painted a very grand introduction during which the score's chivalric derring-do was vividly foreshadowed. The cellist's entry was, well, quixotic. He typically treated the solo passages with plenty of rubato and a rhapsodic abandon that brought to life the doleful knight's colorful adventures.

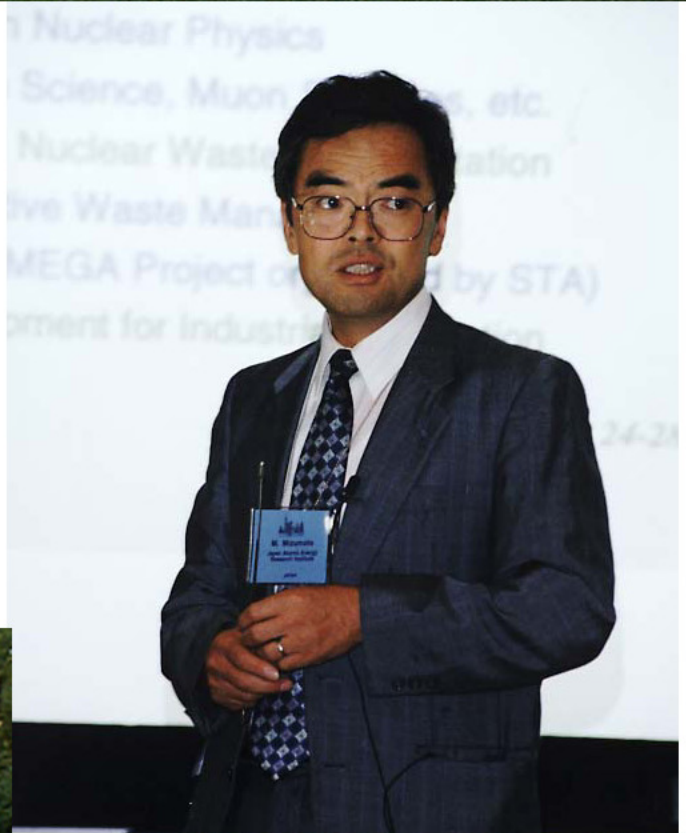
If Ma disappointed, he did so only in the final pages depicting the Don's death. But the performance, which included splendid contributions from violist Charles Pikler (a bluff Sancho Panza) and violinist Samuel Magad, was still pretty magical.

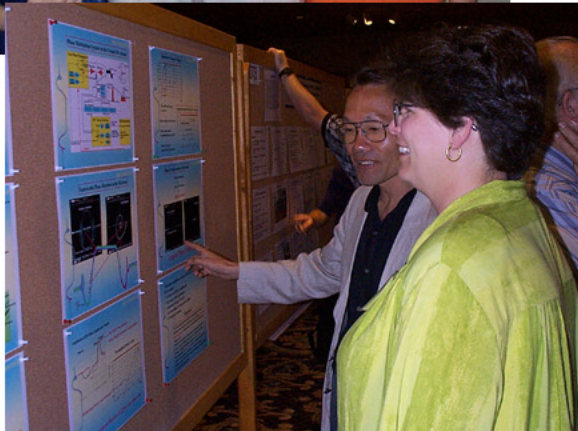
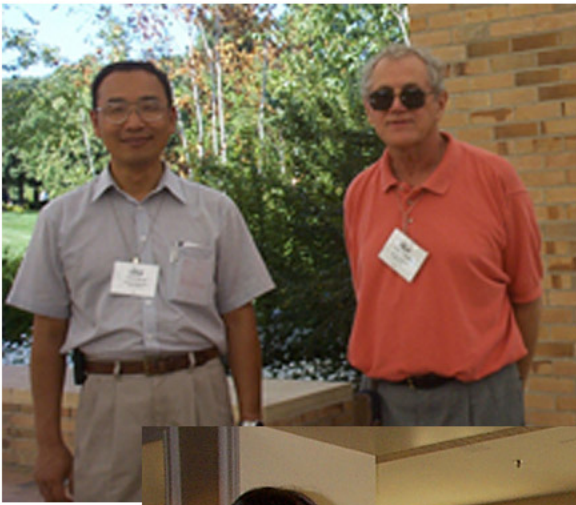
For his part, Fisch had a firm grasp of the broad Straussian outline and the myriad narrative details. The sheep bleated noisily, the penitents paraded solemnly; you felt the adrenaline rush as the Don flew through the air.

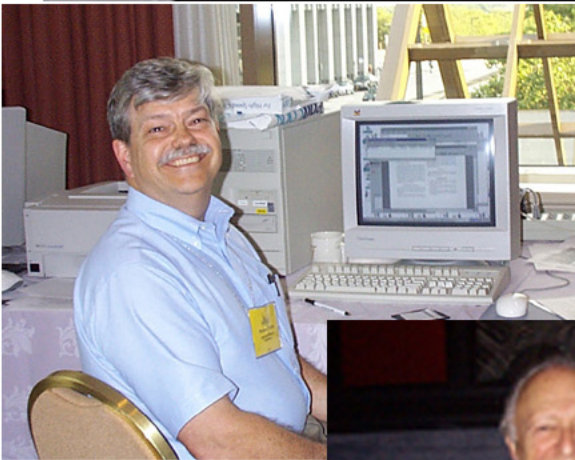
Fisch, music director of the Vienna Volksoper, proved a good man to entrust with this final CSO week at Ravinia '98. (He is scheduled to lead the orchestra's final performance Thursday.) The highly favorable impression he made at the helm of Lyric Opera's "Madama Butterfly" last season was confirmed by the hearty vigor and genial Bohemian sentiment he brought to Dvorak's seldom-heard Symphonic Variations.

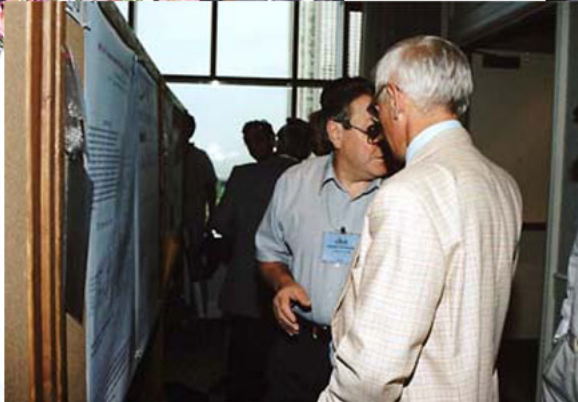
Although the orchestra has not played the score for a number of seasons, it came through well for the guest conductor, despite fierce competition from Ravinia's infamous cicada chorus.



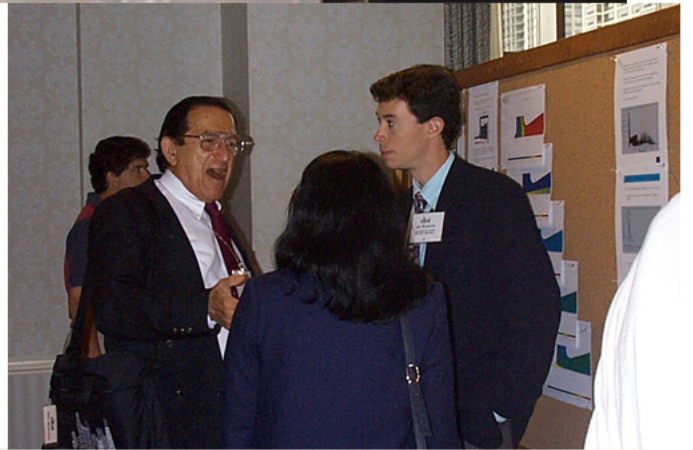




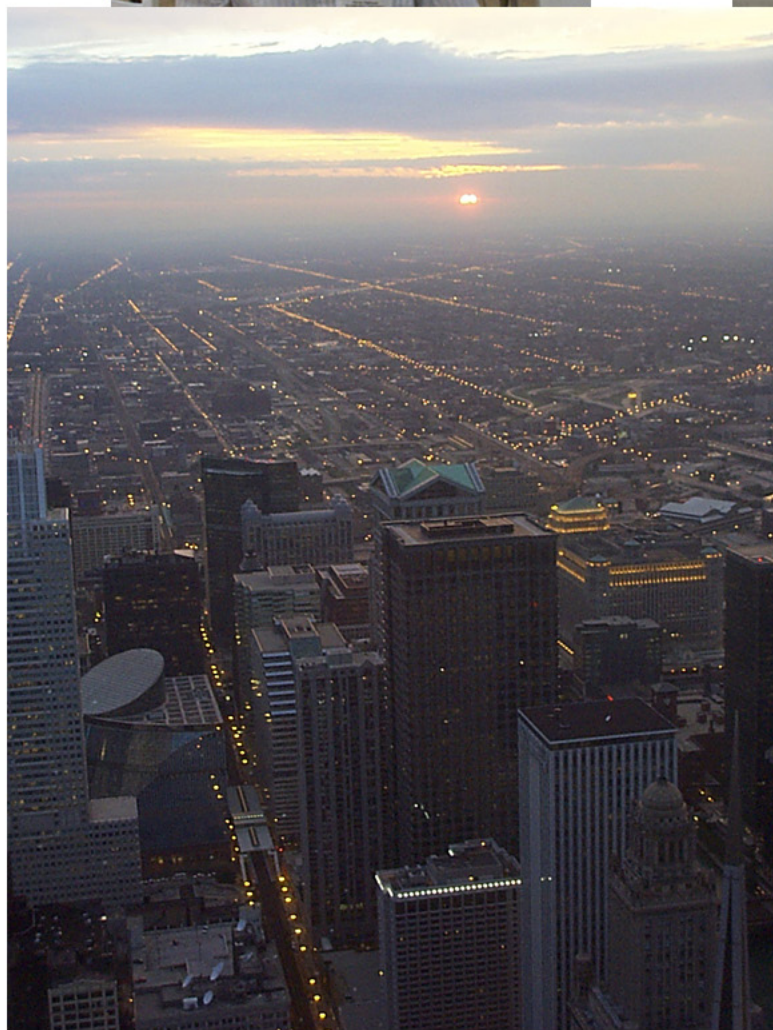












*Carillon Recital for
XIX International LINAC Conference*
by
Wylie Crawford

at the
Chicago Botanic Garden

August 26, 1998
4:00 PM

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|----|---------------------------------|-------------------|
| 1. | Prelude Solennel for Carillon | W. Lawrence Curry |
| 2. | Carillon | G. F. Händel |
| 3. | Themes from the Cinema | |
| | Forbidden Games | Anonymous |
| | The Godfather | Nino Rota |
| | | arr. S. S. Warner |
| | If ... | David Gates |
| | | arr. G. White |
| 4. | Gymnopédie No. 1 | Erik Satie |
| | | arr. W. Crawford |
| 5. | The University of Chicago Suite | Kamiel Lefévere |
| | The Chapel – “Meditation” | |
| | Prayer – “Thanksgiving” | |
| | The Bells – “Rejoicing” | |

