



## POLAR MUSIC PRIZE

Stevie Wonder, Polar Music Prize Laureate 1999

The 1999 POLAR Prize is awarded to the American singer and composer Stevie Wonder for a unique career as a singer, composer and stage artist. As a young boy he already stood with both feet on firm musical ground, rooted as he was in soul and gospel. After the early years with the legendary Motown recording company, which signed him up as a "Little Stevie Wonder" when he was only 12 years old, he gradually released a striking curiosity and responsiveness to current developments in black music, successfully incorporating in his own music a host of stylistic elements reflecting both tradition and renewal. These have since been amalgamated to form the supremely personal inflection which makes him one of the absolutely pivotal figures of present-day rock.

With a number of classical albums such as *Songs in the Key of Life* during the 1970s he consolidated his position in the instrumental sphere as well, partly by pioneering new uses of the synthesizer and its growing acoustic potential. We also find him in the role of elder statesman of black music, actively concerned with black rights (USA For Africa).

Stevie Wonder is without question one of the great personalities of rock. His pregnant and powerfully expressive vocal presence, coupled with a musicianly elegance lightly borne, are important qualities forming part of the broad, personal spectrum of irresistible musical gesture and compelling emotion which is his personal hallmark.