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Performing a forgotten British gem at the Proms

At the age of 60, a fascination for rediscovering little-known music and for commissioning new works is as strong as ever

[Raphael Wallfisch \(/podium/Raphael%20Wallfisch\)](#) 12:28pm GMT 24th July 2013

This has already been a very special year, celebrating my 60th anniversary with some wonderful concerts in beautiful venues around the world.

The year kicked off with a dream recording of Jewish works by Bloch, Caplet and Ravel, which will be released soon on Nimbus. I had planned this particular recording for years but had to wait until my son, Benjamin was big enough to conduct! It was very special to be able to share it with him. This was followed shortly afterwards by another interesting recording of the 20th century British composer [Cyril Scott's Cello and Piano Concertos for Dutton](#) (http://www.amazon.co.uk/Cyril-Scott-Piano-Concerto-Cello/dp/B00C9ABPOC/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1374661369&sr=8-1&keywords=Wallfisch+Cyril+Scott). The CD is a recording premiere of this version of the Cello Concerto and I am delighted that I was able to rediscover this superb work.

I have always had a fascination for the rediscovery of forgotten gems of the English repertoire and I feel more eager than ever to uncover these works and give them the recognition they deserve. It is too often the case that a piece of music will have been cast aside with the label 'over romanticism' in favour of something new and ground-breaking. Yet these pieces can be just as satisfying if they are taken on musical merit alone.

With this in mind I am thrilled to be performing Sir Granville Bantock's little-known *Sapphic Poem* [at the BBC Proms today](http://www.bbc.co.uk/proms/whats-on/2013/july-24/14586) (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/proms/whats-on/2013/july-24/14586>) (Wednesday, July 24). An interesting blend of cello concerto and tone poem, the piece is a beautiful example of the vast treasure trove of British music for cello that has been unjustly neglected. Indeed, I hope that the focus on Bantock's music at this year's Proms festival will inspire more music-lovers to explore the composer's remarkably impressive output.

My enthusiasm for British music has naturally led to some strong friendships with many contemporary composers, several of whom have written new works for me. It is not, however, an easy task, I have frequently found that composers tend to worry about writing a cello concerto, perhaps because of the tricky orchestrations, and will put off writing one until their latter years. For example, both Elgar and Walton's cello concertos were written in the last years of their lives – Elgar's concerto was one of the last notable pieces he wrote. Indeed, I asked the composer John Corigliano whether he had considered composing a cello concerto and the response was, 'Maybe I'll write one eventually!'

Fortunately, some of my composer friends have managed to overcome this stigma and later this year I will be recording three cello concertos that were written for me by composers Rob Simpson, John Joubert and Christopher Wright, with all of whom I have collaborated closely in the past. I hope that these tremendous pieces will have their place in the core cello repertoire in years to come.

Whether discovering a new work or rediscovering one of the past, at the age of 60, I feel more passionately about music and about playing the cello than ever and I can only encourage music lovers to join me in celebrating the vast array of amazing music available to us.



[Raphael Wallfisch \(/podium/Raphael%20Wallfisch\)](#)

With a prolific discography and concert appearances with many of the world's greatest orchestras and conductors, Raphael Wallfisch is at the height of his powers as a concert cellist. With a masterful technique and a soaring, singing sound that evokes a tradition continued from his teacher, Piatigorsky, he can now claim to be the most recorded contemporary cellist and perhaps the most recorded British string player in history.

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