

Raphael Wallfisch's journey of discovery

Great Cellists
Gaspar Cassadó

Julian Rachlin
Life Lessons

SINCE 1890

the

Strad

JANUARY 2017 VOL.128 NO.1521

thestrاد.com

Emerson Quartet

40 years of music making

Sam Zygmuntowicz

Project Strad3D and beyond



21st CENTURY VIOLIN CONCERTOS

IN THE STUDIO, ON THE STAGE – HOW COMPOSERS AND
PLAYERS ARE REINVENTING THE TRADITION

UK£5.20 • US\$10.99 • CAN\$13.95



Contents

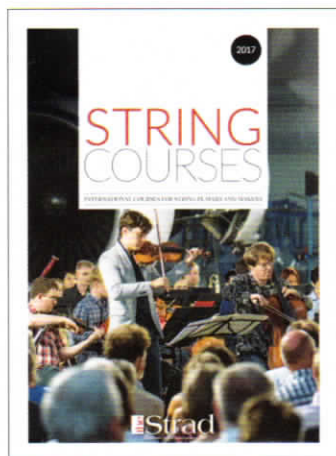
VOL. 128 ISSUE NO

1521

JANUARY 2017

30

COVER STORY
21st-century violin concertos



Free
String Courses 2017
supplement

EDITOR'S LETTER 7 CONTRIBUTORS 8 SOUNDPOST 10

FEATURES

30 THE 21ST-CENTURY VIOLIN CONCERTO

Peter Quantrill talks to some of today's leading composers about writing and orchestra, and soloists discuss the challenges of giving their premieres.

39 SAM ZYGMUNTOWICZ

For the past three decades the US-based maker has been involved with projects involving stringed instruments. *Chloe Cutts* meets him to find out more.

44 SESSION REPORT

Raphael Wallfisch talks to *Rebecca Schmid* about his latest recording of concertos by exiled Jewish composers Goldschmidt, Weigl and Reizenstein.

46 EMERSON QUARTET

With the UK's *Paul Watkins* now firmly established as cellist, the US-based foursome have many more future projects planned, as they reveal to *Jessie*.

53 GREAT CELLISTS: GASPAR CASSADÓ

David Milsom examines the life and recordings of the Catalanian cellist and composer, once considered the natural successor to Pablo Casals.

RAPHAEL WALLFISCH RECORDS CELLO CONCERTOS BY BERTHOLD GOLDSCHMIDT, KARL WEIGL AND FRANZ REIZENSTEIN

The British cellist discusses uncovering unknown works and recording Goldschmidt's Cello Concerto, part of a three-disc series with the Konzerthausorchester Berlin surveying exiled Jewish composers

The composers I've selected for this survey were all refugees who were forced to flee their home countries because of the Second World War. Many years ago the conductor Thomas Sanderling, who recorded Karl Weigl's symphonies, told me about the composer's Cello Concerto. In September last year I managed to contact the Weigl family in America, and they sent me the score, parts and piano reduction. The piece is extremely melodic and symphonic, very much following the line of his compatriot Zemlinsky – and it had never been played. What's more, the second movement has a dedication to Piatigorsky, who was my teacher. Why was it not played? It was written in 1939, and in the upheaval of leaving Austria for the US, Weigl probably had other things on his mind.

There's a bittersweet quality to the music of this period; an inner tragedy that isn't always obvious, and this is true of all three pieces on this recording. I recognise this from my own parents – the unspoken sorrow for things lost. Of course, to play Jewish music in Berlin has huge significance. My mother, the cellist Anita Lasker-Wallfisch, was in the city on Kristallnacht in 1938, studying cello. When she woke up on the morning of 10 November there was glass everywhere.



'THERE'S A
BITTERSWEET QUALITY
TO THE MUSIC OF THIS
PERIOD; AN INNER
TRAGEDY THAT ISN'T
ALWAYS OBVIOUS'

As part of the next generation there is a quiet symbolism to my coming back and playing this music here.

As a cellist, you are constantly told that there's no repertoire, but on this album we have three very strong pieces that are hardly known. An advantage of making a recording is that you sometimes hit on an obscure work that captures people's imaginations, and suddenly there's

a renaissance. There was a resurgence of interest in the German-Jewish composer Berthold Goldschmidt when he was in his nineties, thanks to Simon Rattle who became very interested in his pre-exile life in Germany and promoted his music. My mother joked: 'the old-age prodigy'. Suddenly he was the toast of the town! But it took a long time. And thank goodness he had a little enjoyment of it. He was middle-aged when he wrote his Cello Concerto, in the 1950s, and I have the feeling it is a deeply personal piece. There is a Viennese sound to it – an almost sarcastic elegance. I am reminded of Korngold. But it's also a cry, full of darkness but with huge energy.

The final work on the disc is the world premiere recording of the Franz Reizenstein Cello Concerto, which he wrote in exile in England in 1951 and which is heavily influenced by his teacher Hindemith. It is more of a virtuoso piece than the Goldschmidt, which by contrast is a kind of integrated argument. I think the Reizenstein will prove to be a very colourful and brilliant showcase for the cello. It is also a piece in great need of advocacy – one that has been left unexplored, like the Weigl.

The atmosphere while working with the Konzerthausorchester Berlin was

Raphael Wallfisch recording with the Konzerthausorchester Berlin: 'Everybody was committed to this repertoire and wanted to do their best'



wonderful. Everybody was committed to this repertoire and wanted to do their best. Our conductor, Nicholas Milton, also knew how to save time; when not to go over something again. A conductor has to trust the producer to make the right cuts and put the recording together. In an ideal world you would record in one take, but if you're coming to the piece cold, the first session will involve reading, reading, reading – and after 20 minutes you record. It's unlikely you will complete the performance without any technical problems: it's usually necessary to work in small parts. Nicholas was delighted with the atmosphere the producer, Sibylle Strobel, created. She found just the right balance of being picky and knowing when to let things go.

Maintaining a balance between orchestra and soloist is always an issue with cello concertos – even Dvořák's is

notorious, and he was so experienced. It's ultimately a question of style: how you interpret an accent, a diminuendo, a mezzo forte. The Goldschmidt Concerto is relatively lightly scored, and yet there are some thick, dark places like the end of the third movement, 'quasi sarabande', going into the last-movement tarantella where, in a concert setting, one must be careful to be heard over the orchestra. At these points I'm not even sure what Goldschmidt was expecting: at one point the orchestra is building up – everyone is playing – and I'm right in the middle dark register of the cello. At the climax there is more mud: very thick and unclear textures and trills, and I'm still not very high. All the winds are playing. This kind of writing is very dangerous because of the pitch, but a recording situation with microphone offers the opportunity to play – and hear – the

dynamics as written. That is great because while many concertos are written almost entirely on the A string – and few use the C string – Goldschmidt uses the cello as a cello; all over the instrument. Everybody should know this piece because it is an important work. ●

INTERVIEW BY REBECCA SCHMID

WORKS Concertos by Berthold Goldschmidt,
Karl Weigl and Franz Reizenstein
ARTISTS Raphael Wallfisch (vc),
Konzerthausorchester Berlin/Nicholas Milton
VENUE Konzerthaus Berlin
RECORDING DATE 27–29 September 2016
CATALOGUE NUMBER Classic Produktion
Osnabrück (CPO) CPO 555 109-2