

ERLING BLÖNDAL BENGTTSSON

HAYDN · BOCCHERINI

CELLO CONCERTOS



ILYA STUPEL

ARTUR RUBINSTEIN PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA



Joseph Haydn

Historisches Museum der Stadt Wien



Luigi Boccherini

Archiv für Kunst und Geschichte, Berlin

Joseph Haydn (1732 - 1809)

Cello Concerto in D major,

Hob. VIIb:2 (op. 101) (1783) 26:45

[1] Allegro moderato 15:24

[2] Adagio 6:00

[3] Rondo: Allegro 5:14

(Cadenzas: Gregor Piatigorsky)

Cello Concerto in C major,

Hob. VIIb:1 (ca. 1765) 25:15

[4] Moderato 9:52

[5] Adagio 8:02

[6] Allegro molto 7:14

(Cadenzas: Erling Blöndal Bengtsson)

Luigi Boccherini (1743 - 1805)

Cello Concerto in B flat major,
(original version) *19:16*

[7] Allegro moderato *8:51*

[8] Andantino grazioso *4:12*

[9] Rondo. Allegro *6:06*

*(Cadenzas: 1st movement: Grützmacher.
3rd movement: Erling Blöndal Bengtsson)*

Erling Blöndal Bengtsson, Cello

Ilya Stupel, Conductor

Artur Rubinstein Philharmonic Orchestra

Joseph Haydn (1732-1809) came from a family of twelve children and modest means. The parents enjoyed music, and music-making was encouraged to the extent possible, and folk music from nearby Hungary would have been among the early influences on the young composer. In 1740 he went to Vienna, where he became a boy singer in the choir of the Stephan Church and received the major part of his musical training. Composition was something he taught himself.

Haydn, whose brother Michael (1737-1806) also was a prominent composer, may be said to have been the last great composer to have worked in feudal conditions. For the greater part of his life he was in the employ of Prince Esterhazy: he worked there until 1790, from which time he was able, thanks to a generous pension, to live independently in Vienna as an artist. In his latter years he became a European celebrity, fêted as the pre-eminent composer of the era (Mozart had died in 1791).

Haydn's importance for the history of music rests among other things on his definitive formulation of the classical sonata form and thereby the form of the symphony and the string quartet. he also contributed to both *genres* with an abundance of works: 104 numbered symphonies and 87 string quartets. Of slightly less significance are his

piano sonatas and piano trios, and as a composer of solo concertos he is overshadowed by Mozart.

He did however complete the first "modern" cello concerto, a work that continues to loom large in the cello repertoire, and he also composed what must be termed the best trumpet concerto yet written. His piano and violin concertos are however of less significance.

The concerto for cello and orchestra is in many ways a peculiar phenomenon. The instrument is a popular one, and this century has seen a substantial number of international virtuosos. None the less, the number of great cello concertos is very modest when compared to the wealth of comparable works for the violin and for the piano. After Haydn and Boccherini nothing of any substance was written until 1850, when Schumann composed his A minor concerto, the first romantic concerto for the instrument. And since then there has been little by way of regular concertos beyond those by Dvorák, Saint-Saëns, Lalo, Svendsen and Elgar and, in more recent times, Shostakovich (1st), Prokofiev (*Sinfonia concertante*), Walton, Lutoslawski, Hindemith, Barber and Khachaturian. Of course there is a number of other concertos for the instrument, but few beyond those mentioned here can be called repertoire works.

Concerto for cello and orchestra, D major,
Hob. VIIIb:2 (op. 101) (1783)

Haydn is thought to have written at least four cello concertos (a few seem to have been lost), but the one in D major is the best known of all. It was presumably written for Anton Kraft, who played in Prince Esterhazy's orchestra and was considered one of the leading soloists of his time. In 1923 a German musicologist questioned the origins of the D major concerto: Kraft had studied composition with Haydn, and it was alleged that the concerto was in fact his work and had just been arranged by Haydn. Nowadays there is however general agreement that the concerto is an authentic Haydn work: the autograph score has indeed been lost, but the work appears in Haydn's own, hand-written records.

It is unusual for the solo concertos of this period for there to be thematic links between the three movements, but here the three main themes resembles each other closely. A cyclical relationship such as this is more commonly found in the music of high and late romanticism.

The first movement is a concerto-sonata movement, the second a *cantabile* adagio in A major, and the finale a merry rondo in 6/8 time. Only modest orchestral forces are called for: two oboes, two horns and strings.

Concerto for cello and orchestra, C major,
Hob. VIIIb:1 (ca. 1765)

For many years the C major cello concerto was thought to be lost. That it had existed was not in question: it was listed in Haydn's own catalogue. But the score had vanished without trace. Then in 1961 a complete set of parts was located in the Radenin collection in Prague's national museum. Research has dated the concerto to around 1765, before Haydn's "mature" period. Although all three movements are in sonata form, there is much in the concerto that points back to the baroque concerto. But then it should be remembered that the style that is now properly known as the "classical" had yet barely been born - and baroque style had not finally passed on. Haydn would have been about thirty-three when he composed this concerto, Mozart nine and Beethoven not yet born. Fifteen years would have passed since Bach died, six since Handel passed away.

The first movement opens with the air of pride Haydn associated with the key of C major, but when the soloist joins in it is with a lyrical touch. Towards the middle of the movement the soloist is given the opportunity to display his virtuosity, but the limited thematic development still harks back to the style of the baroque concerto. In the adagio

the strings alone provide the orchestral accompaniment, and the music keeps within a rather narrow tonal framework. In the finale the soloist has every opportunity to show off. As in the case of the D major concerto, the orchestra consists just of oboes, horns and strings.

Luigi Boccherini (1743-1805) had to put up with the derisive nickname "Mrs Haydn". Not because the two men had a particularly close relationship - on the contrary: it is doubtful they ever met - but because it was evident that Boccherini was a great admirer of Haydn and tried hard to emulate him, though without ever reaching the same heights. Much of his music is, by comparison with that of Haydn, more gentle, yielding, even feminine.

Boccherini, an Italian, was one of the great cello virtuosos of his age. He toured extensively and settled in 1769 in Madrid as Court Conductor; for some years he was also attached to the Court of the Prussian King Friedrich II in Berlin. His tenure in Madrid left a Spanish stamp on some of his works: one of the string quintets even bears the name, "*Fandango*".

Towards the end of his life Boccherini was to see his fame and popularity pale, and he ended his days in something approaching penury.

Boccherini was a very prolific composer and has notably a lot of chamber music to his credit: upwards of 300 string quintets besides quartets and trios. His guitar quintets were to gain particular popularity. A contemporary, the Frenchman Jean-Baptiste Cartier, said of Boccherini: "Had God wanted to speak to man by means of music He would have chosen Haydn, but had He just wanted to hear music He would have opted for Boccherini".

Concerto for cello and orchestra,
B flat major (original version)

Boccherini wrote an entire series of cello concertos, most of which - like by far the greater part of his *oeuvre* - are now forgotten. Only the B flat major concerto is remembered, and even it was for many years played only in the version by the German virtuoso Grützmacher, which is still to be heard. The version recorded here is Boccherini's own. The concerto has not been accurately dated but is thought to originate from the period when the composer toured Europe as a virtuoso. It places great demands on the soloist, with the solo part pitched very high and requiring extensive double-stopping. The first movement, the longest of the three,

shifts in mood between the extrovert, swaggering main theme and more lyrical passages in between. The slow movement is graceful and has a charming melody, whilst the rondo is based on a lively main theme to a mazurka rhythm.

The orchestra is a modest one: two horns and strings.

Mogens Wenzel Andreassen

When at the age of three **Erling Blöndal Bengtsson** was given a violin by his father, his immediate instinct was to position it between his knees. However much his father protested, he could not be persuaded to hold it under his chin. The boy was adamant, and just six months later he gave his first public recital, on a viola with an end-pin attached to it.

Seven years later he was allowed to make his debut with an orchestra in Copenhagen's Tivoli Concert Hall where, in the summer of 1992, Erling Blöndal Bengtsson was celebrated on the occasion of his sixtieth birthday, the fiftieth anniversary of his debut, and as the greatest living Danish cellist - if not one of the finest anywhere, with his bright, slender tone, at once elegantly nimble and glowing with concentration and pained recognition.

“The born cellist” is no hackneyed cliché when applied to Blöndal Bengtsson. He found it all so easy that he could make do with one hour's practice a day as a child - and indeed no more was asked of him by his violinist father and exceptionally musical mother, an Icelandic woman straight out of the ancient sagas.

In 1948, just sixteen years old, Erling Blöndal Bengtsson travelled to Philadelphia to take up studies with the pre-eminent cellist of the time, the Russian-born Gregor Piatigorsky. Just one year later he became Piatigorsky's assistant at the Curtis Institute of Music, and the year after that he had succeeded him as teacher at the Institute.

He stayed in the United States for five years before letting himself be tempted back to a teaching job at the Royal Danish Academy of Music in Copenhagen. He was appointed professor at the age of 29, and has during the course of a career spanning almost 40 years become a model for a whole family of young cellists playing in Denmark and abroad, while at the same time tending his own soloist career. Between 1958 and 1978 he was also attached to the Swedish State Radio School of Music in Stockholm; he was a professor at the Musikhochschule in Cologne from 1978 to 1982, and continues regularly to give masterclasses at the

University of Southern California, Los Angeles, at Aldeburgh, Sion, and in Scandinavia.

In 1990 he moved back to the United States to take up a professorship at one of North America's leading centres of music, The University of Michigan School of Music in Ann Arbor.

Blöndal Bengtsson's repertoire is just as all-encompassing as his teaching activities. Much of it has been recorded; the complete Bach solo suites and the Beethoven sonatas, solo works by Reger and Ysaÿe, cello concertos by Boccherini, Haydn, Schumann, Dvorák, Lalo, Saint-Saëns and Tchaikovsky, but also some contemporary music. His insatiable curiosity about modern music has resulted in the first performance of a number of Scandinavian cello concertos, many of which are also dedicated to him, including those of Niels Viggo Bentzon, Vagn Holmboe, Herman D. Koppel, Jan Maegaard and Jon Nordal. He has played the Danish premieres of concertos by Britten, Barber, Khatchaturian, Delius, Lutoslawski and Walton, and indeed the latter two have themselves conducted performances with Blöndal Bengtsson as soloist.

For a number of years he has been playing 60 - 70 concerts a year, in Europe, the United States, and the former Soviet

Union, and he has appeared with all the main Scandinavian orchestras and numerous foreign ones, including the Royal Philharmonic, BBC Symphony, St. Petersburg (formerly Leningrad) Philharmonic, and the Salzburg Mozarteum, with conductors such as Sir Malcolm Sargent, Pierre Monteux, Nicolai Malko, Hans Schmidt-Isserstedt, Paavo Berglund, Sixten Ehrling and Yuri Temirkanov.

And Blöndal Bengtsson's audiences value him. He is a member of the Royal Swedish Academy of Music and has been awarded the Danish "Discophile" prize of 1958 and the Hyman Morrison Medal for Cello in Gold in 1957, among many other prizes. He is also First Knight of the Danish Order of Dannebrog, and Commander of the Icelandic Order of Falcon.

Lotte Bichel

Ilya Stupel - a rising star in the musical firmament who has been described as one of the greatest conducting talents in the world - was born on 13th December 1948 in Vilnius, Lithuania. He grew up in a family whose rich musical traditions went back for several generations. He first started playing the piano aged only three, and was referred to as a child prodigy after he had joined the Conservatory in Vilnius. In 1957 Ilya Stupel moved to Poland where he continued his musical training; at the same time he was engaged as assistant to the famous conductor and teacher Bohdan Wodiczko of the Katowice Radio Symphony Orchestra (WOSPR). Stupel's Jewish descent has had a strong bearing on his fortunes, and every time his career has seemed to be in the ascendant he and his family have been forced to tear up their roots and start again in another country. So it was that in 1968 Stupel and his family left Poland and settled in their present home country, Sweden.

After comprehensive studies in Lithuania, Poland, Sweden, Denmark and Italy (conducting, composition, piano and jazz) Stupel devoted himself to composing and to his new appointment as conductor at the Malmö Municipal Theatre. After a number of years of work in Scandinavia (as Head of Music at the theatre in Helsingborg and

appearances in Malmö, Stockholm, Gothenburg, Copenhagen, Aalborg, Aarhus etc.) and beyond (U.S.A., Spain, France, Germany, Israel), he was in 1990 appointed Head of the renowned Artur Rubinstein Philharmonic Orchestra in Lodz, Poland, which has worked with such conductors as Stokowsky, Kletzki and Khatchaturian.

Critics have declared unanimously that Stupel's great strength as a conductor is his ability, by means of his unorthodox interpretations, full of vitality and sheer musicianship, to reach out to every single member of his audience, as witness the enthusiasm that greets all his performances and follows him from appearance to appearance.

Ilya Stupel has signed an exclusive recording contract with Danacord.

English translation: Per Sommerschild

Erling Blöndal Bengtsson on Danacord

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Capriccio italien
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CORD

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DAC OCD 416
DIGITAL DDD

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Ilya Stupel, Conductor

**Artur Rubinstein Philharmonic
Orchestra**

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Danacord Records
Gernersgade 35
DK - 1319 Copenhagen DENMARK
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