

signum
CLASSICS

JAMIE WALTON
DANIEL GRIMWOOD

SHOSTAKOVICH
Cello Sonata in D minor

BRITTEN
Cello Sonata in C major

PROKOFIEV
Cello Sonata in C major



SHOSTAKOVICH, BRITTEN & PROKOFIEV

CELLO SONATAS

Cello Sonata in D minor, Op.40 Dmitri Shostakovich (1906 – 1975)

- | | | |
|---|-----------------------|---------|
| 1 | i. Allegro non troppo | [12.16] |
| 2 | ii. Allegro | [2.56] |
| 3 | iii. Largo | [7.02] |
| 4 | iv. Allegro | [4.15] |

Cello Sonata in C major, Op.65 Benjamin Britten (1913 – 1976)

- | | | |
|---|-------------------------|--------|
| 5 | i. Dialogo | [6.18] |
| 6 | ii. Scherzo – Pizzicato | [2.22] |
| 7 | iii. Elegia | [5.28] |
| 8 | iv. Marcia | [1.56] |
| 9 | v. Moto perpetuo | [2.35] |

Cello Sonata in C major, Op.119 Sergei Prokofiev (1891 – 1953)

- | | | |
|----|----------------------------|--------|
| 10 | i. Andante grave | [9.54] |
| 11 | ii. Moderato | [4.27] |
| 12 | iii. Allegro ma non troppo | [7.54] |

Total timings: [67.26]

JAMIE WALTON CELLO
DANIEL GRIMWOOD PIANO

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From his teenage years until his late twenties, Shostakovich's music was a riot of invention and non-stop productivity, employing current avant-garde styles imported from the West as well as home-grown Russian and Soviet elements, all shot through with his own growing voice as a composer. Three symphonies, film scores (silent, talkie and animated), operas, ballets, incidental music, masterpieces such as the Piano Concerto No.1, Piano Trio No.1 and the Jazz Suite No.1 and the Cello Sonata were cementing his reputation as the pre-eminent composer of the new generation. He was certainly hot news and his views were sought on all sorts of matters musical and otherwise. But cold reality was to bite bitterly. In 1934, the same year he composed his only cello sonata, the 27-year-old Shostakovich had a runaway, international success with his opera, *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District*, which was regarded as a high-water mark in Soviet opera and was praised by the authorities as 'the result of the general success of socialist construction'. But, in 1936, with the arts now centralized under the control of the All-Union Committee on Artistic Affairs, the tide was turning against any composers with so-called 'formalist' tendencies. Stalin attended a performance of *Lady Macbeth* in January of that year and was offended by the forthrightness

of the subject matter and Shostakovich's advanced musical language. Two days later, the now notorious *Pravda* editorial appeared describing *Lady Macbeth* under the headline 'Muddle instead of Music' as a 'discordant, confused stream of sounds ... the music cracks, grunts and growls'. Soon after, his ballet, *The Limpid Stream*, which was in the repertory of the Bolshoi Ballet at the time, fared no better under the banner, 'Balletic Falsehood'. Although now seen as preposterous and philistine, at the time these were unprecedented articles. *Pravda*, the official organ of Soviet Communism, disapproved in language verging upon the violent; the 'cheap clowning' of *Lady Macbeth* being chillingly described as 'a game of clever ingenuity that may end very badly.' The party had spoken – this music was not to be imitated and the works in question disappeared from the repertory forthwith.

Nobody in the Soviet Union was immune to Stalin's Great Purge in the late 1930s. Neither the poorest citizen-comrade nor the highest ranking party officials could escape Stalin's clunking fist as he sought to consolidate power by 'cleansing' the Communist Party, and the country at large, of so-called dissidents, undesirable anti-revolutionaries and other 'enemies of the people'. Ethnic minorities were

deported, peasants and professionals and party apparatchiks too far to the left or too far to the right were imprisoned and killed on the flimsiest of evidence or the cruel expedient of the forced confession. Many hundreds of thousands were killed and millions more consigned to labour camps. The arts were under intense scrutiny for any perceived modernism and a good many writers, artists and composers paid dearly in the process. One of the major buzzwords of the time was 'formalism', which was essentially a charge against a work that was not considered to appeal directly to the masses. On this matter, Shostakovich was adjudged to have failed his country and comrades by producing works lacking in Socialist Realism – a serious breach of the party line.

Shostakovich knew nothing of the attack until days later when he happened to buy a copy of *Pravda* at a railway station after performing his **Cello Sonata Op.40** in Arkhangelsk with his close friend, the cellist Viktor Kubatsky. The sonata is dedicated to Kubatsky, who gave the world premiere, with the composer accompanying, in Leningrad on Christmas Day, 1934. Written prior to the condemnations, the work is generally positive in tone, whilst retaining the composer's trademark caustic wit, soulful expanses, insistent

ostinati and prickly, high spirits – all qualities which would sustain his music, at least, through times good and bad.

Although the ramifications of the editorials were not immediately clear, the aftershocks rippled rapidly through Soviet culture. With Stalin gearing up for the first of the infamous Moscow show trials later in the year, and the Great Purge hot on their heels, everyone had to watch their step. Shostakovich had been working on his colossal, modernist Fourth Symphony for some time, but it no longer suited the mood of the times and he was forced to withdraw it during rehearsals, in December 1936. Neither the Fourth Symphony nor *Lady Macbeth* would be heard again for some 25 years. The golden boy of Soviet music had become a degenerate corrupter. Although he eventually worked his way back into the party's favour, these were difficult times for anybody showing the merest modicum of dissent, artistic or otherwise.

All the stranger then that Prokofiev should have chosen to return to his homeland in 1935, despite the various musical organisations inexorably coming under Communist Party control. After leaving the evolving Soviet Union in 1918, Prokofiev spent most of the 1920s and early

1930s in the USA and France, where much as he tried, he failed to emulate the popularity of Rachmaninov in America or Stravinsky in Western Europe. Although also a Russian composer abroad, Prokofiev had neither fled nor left the Soviet Union without official permission, had by no means ever severed ties with his beloved Russia and, indeed, spent extended periods there on a number of occasions in the early 1930s. By 1936, he had moved his family permanently from Paris to Moscow, where he was allowed two more tours of Europe and the USA before his coveted passport, a rare allowance, was removed on a technicality, and somehow never returned. Whether his initial motivation was concerned with his stated desire to return to his own country, to 'see the real Winter again', or to indulge in the privileges attendant on a celebrated Soviet composer returning home from the corrupting influence of the West, he would remain for the rest of his life as an artist of the USSR and a musical servant to the man with whom he would share his very dying hour – Stalin.

A dozen years after the first great condemnations, many a career nosedived with further charges of 'formalism' being aimed at both Prokofiev and Shostakovich, among others. Stalin's

cultural spokesman Andrei Zhdanov led the latest purge, in 1948, which all but made the pair 'un-persons' in the eyes of the authorities, under the so-called Zhdanov Doctrine which held that 'The only conflict that is possible in Soviet culture is the conflict between good and best.' This meant sticking very closely to the party line on all matters creative. In practical terms, the second denunciation meant having to repent publicly for being off-message and the unofficial cessation of performances for those works labelled as being of a 'formalist' bent. Family privileges were also withdrawn and many were forced into a more or less hand-to-mouth existence. During one of the interminable conferences where composers were coerced into delivering official apologies, Prokofiev was stunned to hear that his first wife had been arrested on suspicion of spying. These trumped-up charges earned her eight years in a labour camp, and Prokofiev would die three years before she was released, in 1956.

One of the few rays of light in this dark period for Prokofiev was his collaboration with the spectacularly talented young cellist Mstislav Rostropovich (1927-2007). The composer had heard Rostropovich play his long-neglected Cello Concerto Op.58 in 1947 and was so

amazed by the performance that he resolved to re-write the work for the cellist. The trigger for Prokofiev's **Cello Sonata Op.119** was likewise occasioned by another Rostropovich concert, this time playing a sonata by the composer's long-time friend Miaskovsky. The great pianist Sviatolsav Richter, who not only accompanied Rostropovich in the first performance of the sonata, but also conducted the first performance of the re-written Cello Concerto, recalls the background to the sonata's premiere:

Before playing it in concert, we had to perform it at the Composer's Union, where these gentlemen decided the fate of all new works. During this period, more than any other, they needed to work out whether Prokofiev had produced a new masterpiece or, conversely, a piece that was 'hostile to the spirit of the people.' Three months later, we had to play it again at a plenary session of all the composers who sat on the Radio Committee, and it wasn't until the following year that we were able to perform it in public, in the Small Hall of the Moscow Conservatory on March 1, 1950.

Whether or not dictated by the Soviet State policy of the day, simplicity is paramount in the sonata.

Gone are the more abrasively dissonant techniques often so thrillingly prominent in his works and the harmony, rhythm and accompaniment are uncluttered and direct in utterance. The cello is employed particularly successfully in its lower register, joyful and movingly lyrical by turns. The whole effect is satisfying and positive, hardly bereft of struggle, but up-beat rather than downcast. It is hardly surprising Miaskovsky thought it, 'a miraculous piece of music.'

Virtually everything written for cello by the three composers represented on this CD came as a result of experiencing Rostropovich's unique technique, inimitable sound and abundant enthusiasm. The impact that Rostropovich had on the cello repertoire of the last century can hardly be underestimated – the fact that the Shostakovich sonata was not written for him can be put down to the cellist being a boy of seven years at the time of composition. Shostakovich soon made up for this oversight by accepting the young cellist, and at the time, budding composer, into his composition class in 1943. Their good friendship seems to have remained tinged with a master-pupil relationship, though Shostakovich was not short on kindnesses, such as funding the

young man's first concert suit. That both of Shostakovich's concertos were written specifically for Rostropovich is testimony enough to the esteem in which the composer held the cellist. In his last years, Prokofiev and Rostropovich, now in his mid-twenties, became fast friends, spending a number of summers together at the composer's dacha in Nikolina Gora, whilst collaborating on the re-writing of the early cello concerto and on a couple of other cello works which unfortunately Prokofiev did not live to complete.

Rostropovich was also at the centre of the action when Shostakovich and Britten met for the first time at the Royal Festival Hall in London, September 1960, on the occasion of the UK premiere of the Russian composer's First Cello Concerto. Britten accepted Shostakovich's invitation to sit with him in his box only days after being astounded by a radio broadcast featuring Rostropovich. After the concert, Shostakovich introduced Britten to Rostropovich whose years behind the Iron Curtain precluded any thorough knowledge of Britten's output. Rostropovich had heard only the *Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra*, which is based on a theme by Purcell. Having not even seen a photograph of Britten, and working purely on this

Baroque-hued evidence, he had assumed Britten was a composer from a previous century and fell into a fit of laughter on being introduced to him. On realising that this was no practical joke and Benjamin Britten was indeed standing before him, he immediately set about imploring the composer to write something for him.

Shostakovich and Britten were admirers of each other's work and it is hardly a surprise that they became well-met acquaintances in later life. Britten dedicated his church parable, *The Prodigal Son* to Shostakovich, who reciprocated the gesture with his Fourteenth Symphony. As a young man, in 1936, Britten had attended a performance of *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District* and, on witnessing the apparent condescension from an older generation of British composers, excoriated them as, 'the "eminent English Renaissance" composers sniggering in the stalls ... There is more in a single page of his *Macbeth* than in the whole of their "elegant" output.' Shostakovich, for his part, discovered Britten's art only later in life, but was no less impressed than the student Britten had been of his own, almost 30 years earlier. It can be difficult to weigh-up Shostakovich's articles and speeches as they could easily have been made under some

duress. Nevertheless, his mentions of Britten tend to be unremittingly positive. But, statements such as, 'I think that anyone who takes music seriously ought to try to get to know Britten's works better' certainly speak for themselves – censor or no censor.

It didn't take long for the ebullient, irrepressible Rostropovich and Britten to form a close and lasting personal and professional relationship. Having no common fluent tongue, they communicated in their own bastardised form of German which came to be known as 'Aldeburgh Deutsch' after Britten's adopted home town. He wrote not only his **Cello Sonata Op.65**, for Rostropovich, but also the three cello suites and the Cello Symphony. Britten, his partner the tenor Peter Pears and Rostropovich's wife, the soprano Galina Vishnevskaya, appear to have enjoyed a free and easy friendship, meeting socially and often performing recitals. Aside from the cello works, Britten also wrote his song set, *The Poet's Echo* for Vishnevskaya, and the solo soprano part in his *War Requiem* was written expressly for her voice. As for the Cello Sonata itself, Vishnevskaya describes it as a portrait of her husband, 'now high and expressive, now low and grumbling, now gay and carefree.' His first piece of entirely

instrumental music in over a decade, Britten himself accompanied Rostropovich in the first performance at the Aldeburgh festival in 1961.

Naturally, there were a good many differences between Prokofiev, Shostakovich and Britten on matters musical and otherwise. Britten had the life-long freedom to tour the world accepting generous commissions, overseeing premieres, absorbing the acclaim and the honours attendant on his status. Shostakovich and Prokofiev, after his return to Russia, maintained a mutable status in the Soviet Union, often rather less elevated than either desired and sometimes fraught with danger. Nevertheless, all three, in their own way, and with the help and comradeship of the ever-resilient Rostropovich, contrived to compose a number of the greatest works for the cello of the last 100 years.

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JAMIE WALTON

With a powerful and penetrating sound, Jamie Walton is becoming increasingly renowned for his purity of tone, emotionally engaging interpretations and relentless commitment to the music he believes in. Compared by critics to some of the great cellists of the past his distinctive sound and clean interpretations mark Jamie out as a true individualist.

Having appeared throughout much of Europe, the USA, New Zealand, Australia and the UK in some of the world's most eminent halls, Jamie has given radio broadcasts, recitals and concertos in many international festivals and was the first cellist to give a recital in the new Melbourne Recital Centre.

After studying with Margaret Moncrieff at Wells Cathedral School (where he was recently given a Fellowship) he continued his studies with William Pleeth and at the RNCM where he met his duo partner Daniel Grimwood. They have since emerged as one of the most dynamic and original partnerships of their generation, frequently lauded for their passionate and stirring interpretations, unifying chemistry and for championing lesser known repertoire they

believe deserves wider recognition alongside the classics. Their charismatic partnership has taken them to over 20 countries in some of the world's most prestigious concert halls and an increasing discography demonstrates one of the most captivating duo-ships today.

Jamie has recorded ten concertos with the Philharmonia and his unique interpretations are receiving great critical acclaim whilst he gains a reputation as an original interpreter of the repertoire; or as Norman Lebrecht recently wrote: "this is more than a performance; this is an act of interpretation." He has recently recorded the Dvorák and Schumann concertos with the Philharmonia under Vladimir Ashkenazy as well as the complete works for cello by Britten for a forthcoming release.

Equally passionate about chamber music which he describes as the pinnacle of musical expression and experience, Jamie subsequently set up and launched the North York Moors Chamber Music Festival, an instant success going on to be shortlisted for a Royal Philharmonic Society Award in 2011.

As a member of the Worshipful Company of Musicians, he was elected into the Freedom



DANIEL GRIMWOOD

With a repertoire, which ranges from Elizabethan Virginal music to composers of the modern day, Grimwood is carving a reputation as one of the most varied and insightful musicians of his generation. Although primarily a pianist, he is frequently to be found performing on harpsichord, organ, viola or composing at his desk. Felix Aprahamian once wrote of him: "Probably the finest all-round musician I have ever known."

He is a passionate champion of the early piano, and performed (2009) Liszt's *Années de Pèlerinage* at the Wigmore hall on an 1851 Erard to rapturous critical acclaim. His recording of the same was CD of the week in the Telegraph, Editor's Choice in Gramophone magazine and has been unanimously praised in the press.

On being offered a scholarship to the Purcell School in 1987, he studied piano with Graham Fitch, violin/viola with Elspeth Illif and Sybil Copland and composition/counterpoint with Tim Stevenson. He later finished his pianistic training under the tutelage of Vladimir Ovchinnikov and Peter Feuchtwanger. He has

subsequently enjoyed a solo career, which has taken him across the globe, performing in many of the world's most prestigious venues and festivals.

A passionate Chamber musician, Grimwood's work has always been closely associated with cellist Jamie Walton. Their combined work has seen them performing a recital of Chopin at Symphony Hall, Birmingham where they shared the evening with Krystian Zimerman, as well as an appearance at the Chateauville Foundation in Virginia, USA at the personal invitation of Maestro Lorin Maazel.

His recording and performances of Liszt on an 1851 Erard have won him rapturous critical acclaim, and his acquisition of Moscheles' 1840 Erard will enable him to explore the Romantic repertoire more fully.



of the City of London, having performed for HRH The Prince of Wales. Jamie performs on a 1712 Guarneri and is now regarded as one of the most outstanding and relevant cellists of his generation.

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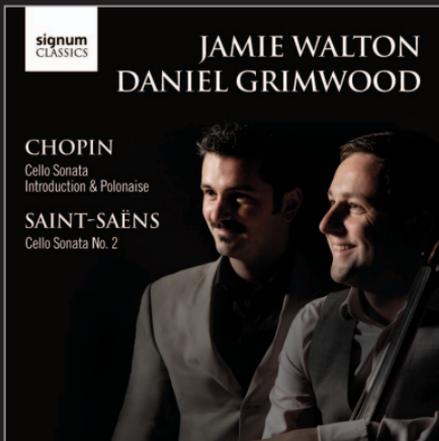
Rachmaninov & Grieg: Cello Sonatas

Jamie Walton, Daniel Grimwood

SIGCD172

"... the musical give-and-take of these players is excellent: they seize upon the music with enthusiasm, energy and sensitivity – one can almost sense that they are keen to show us just how fine this music is ... This CD can certainly be strongly recommended. It is good to see these young artists taking up these works with such conspicuous success."

International Record Review



Chopin & Saint-Saëns: Cello Sonatas

Jamie Walton, Daniel Grimwood

SIGCD252

"Jamie Walton's mature cello timbre and perceptiveness in matters of interpretation and winningly applied to this coupling of two 19th-century sonatas ... Finely honed stylistic judgment here goes hand in hand with re-creative panache."

The Daily Telegraph – ★★★★★