



Victor  
**HERBERT**

Cello Concertos Nos. 1 and 2

Irish Rhapsody

Mark Kosower, Cello  
Ulster Orchestra  
JoAnn Falletta

## Victor Herbert (1859-1924)

### Cello Concertos Nos. 1 and 2 - Irish Rhapsody

There was a time, in the last years of the nineteenth century and the first years of the twentieth, when Victor Herbert was one of the best-known names in American music. He was lionised in New York society, first as a cellist, then as a conductor and finally as the composer of popular light operas. Now that such shows as *Naughty Marietta*, with its hit song *Ah, sweet mystery of life*, are rarely staged, his reputation is kept alive, ironically, by a cello concerto which was forgotten until Julian Lloyd Webber revived it in the mid-1980s.

Herbert was Irish, something he traded on in America where there was a vast diaspora of Irish immigrants; but his musical upbringing was wholly German. When he first arrived in New York, he was referred to in the press as Herr Victor Herbert, and he always spoke with a slight German accent. He was born in Dublin on 1st February 1859 but when he was three, his father died and Victor moved with his mother to London to live with her parents – his grandfather Samuel Lover was a writer and composer. When Victor was five, his mother married a German doctor, and a year later the boy joined her and his stepfather in Stuttgart. He attended the local gymnasium and, thwarted in his desire to become a doctor, on financial grounds, concentrated on his obvious musical gifts. After learning the piano, flute and piccolo, all of which later stood him in good stead, he took up the cello at 15, studying with the well-known German virtuoso Bernhard Cossmann in Baden-Baden. From around 1877 he toured central Europe as a cellist: he had a spell with the orchestra sponsored by Baron Paul von Derwies and a year in Vienna with the Eduard Strauss Orchestra, playing waltzes and polkas.

In 1881 he returned to Stuttgart as solo cellist at the Württemberg Court Opera: this position gave him the opportunity to study harmony, orchestration and counterpoint with the conductor Max Seifriz, a friend of Liszt and Wagner. In the weekly symphony concerts he premièred both his *Suite for Cello and Orchestra* and his *First Cello Concerto*. Falling for one of the sopranos, Therese Förster, he married her in 1886 and soon after that the Herberts emigrated to

New York, where they had both been engaged by the Metropolitan Opera, she as a soloist – although she stayed for little more than a season and soon retired to support her husband's career – and he as a cellist. Herbert joined the string quartet led by the American violinist Sam Franko (later by Louis Schmidt) and played as principal in the Theodore Thomas Orchestra until 1891, appearing as soloist in Brahms's *Double Concerto*, Saint-Saëns's *A minor Concerto* and those by Raff and Rubinstein. He began conducting as assistant to Anton Seidl at summer concerts in Brighton Beach and as Carl Zerrahn's assistant at the Worcester Festival. From 1889 he was on the teaching staff of the new National Conservatory of Music. In 1893 he became conductor of the 22nd Regiment Band and the following year wrote his first operetta, *Prince Ananias*. Two more followed before he took a break from the theatre to conduct the Pittsburgh Symphony (1898-1904), with success until he fell out with the management. In 1903, with *Babes in Toyland*, he inaugurated a sequence of his most successful operettas, lasting until 1917. Meanwhile in 1907 he founded the Victor Herbert Orchestra, with which he toured until his sudden death on 26th May 1924 in New York.

Victor Herbert simply poured out music, for the stage – other composers' shows as well as his own – the concert hall, the band repertoire, Tin Pan Alley and various light music outlets. He recorded for Edison and the Victor Talking Machine Company. He did an immense amount of work for composers' copyrights and helped to found ASCAP. His two operas did not do as well as his lighter fare, even though *Natoma*, premièred by the Metropolitan Opera company in Philadelphia in 1911, had Mary Garden and John McCormack in the cast. His name will be remembered as long as good tunes are still appreciated; and a few of his orchestral works, such as those on this recording, keep a toehold in the concert halls and the record catalogues. The two cello concertos may have been rather pushed to one side by the creations of Dvořák, Elgar, Shostakovich and so on, but they have interesting features, as well as being unfailingly easy on the ear.

The *D major Concerto*, composed in 1884, was premièred at Stuttgart in 1885, with Herbert as soloist and Hofkapellmeister Johann Joseph Abert conducting. A local critic commented: 'Herr Herbert, whose excellent *Suite for Cello and Orchestra* was received with great acclaim last winter, has composed a *Cello Concerto* which is equally praiseworthy. It displays the same characteristics as his *Suite*: it is fresh and sensitive with a fine sense of melody. The *Concerto* is much more challenging technically but these challenges were easily overcome by the composer, who is a master of his instrument.' Herbert played it again at Steinway Hall, New York, on 10th December 1887, with Theodore Thomas on the podium. As his exemplars, Herbert took the concertos of Georg Goltermann (1824-98), several of which he played, but his writing for both cello and orchestra is rather freer. The *Concerto* is scored for double woodwind, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, strings, harp and timpani. The forthright yet easeful opening theme of the *Allegro con spirito* is expounded at some length by the orchestra and the soloist then ruminates on it: the second theme has a more yearning character and a subsidiary third theme is faster. The structure is quite loose: the first theme is used for most of the development and the second theme comes into its own later in the movement. Herbert allows for the soloist to improvise a cadenza. The songlike outer sections of the *Andante* enclose the *Scherzo (Vivace)*, an unusual alternative to the contrasting theme one would normally expect in a ternary slow movement. After some introductory flourishes, the finale reveals itself as an exciting polonaise, which takes the solo cello up quite high and demands a fair degree of virtuosity.

The *E minor Concerto* was dedicated to the Philharmonic Society of New York and premièred by them at Music Hall on 9th March 1894, with Herbert as soloist and Anton Seidl conducting. The critic of *The New York Times* did not bother to attend the concert and went instead to the afternoon public rehearsal, delivering himself of a lot of patronising remarks and admitting that the work showed 'good handicraft' before concluding: 'All that need be said here is that if a man feels driven to the verge of composition, it is well that he understands the technics as well as Mr Herbert. It is a pity that the gods did not bless

him with a violin.' An infinitely more interested observer, in the evening, was Herbert's boss at the National Conservatory, Antonín Dvořák: he was amazed to hear how Herbert handled a bigish orchestra – the same as in the *First Concerto*, without the harp – and contrived not to mask the solo cello. Afterwards Dvořák embraced Herbert in the Green Room, exclaiming: 'Famos! Famos! Ganz famos!' ('Splendid! Splendid! Absolutely splendid!') The great Czech cellist Hanus Wihan had been on at Dvořák for some time to write him a concerto, and hearing Herbert's fine work led directly to the composition of the *B minor Concerto*, perhaps Dvořák's greatest single masterpiece.

Herbert's *Second Concerto* understandably shows an advance on the *First* and is more tightly constructed. The solo cello sings even more convincingly on the A string. The rhetorical opening to the *Allegro impetuoso* is quickly taken up by the soloist and the entire movement is more or less monothematic, as all the motifs, including a more flowing second theme, are related to the first theme. We are led via a brief bridging *Lento* straight into the *Andante tranquillo*, with an eloquent main theme and a broad contrasting theme. As in the *First Concerto*, Herbert challenges the soloist with quite a virtuosic finale.

The *Irish Rhapsody for Grand Orchestra*, a blatant but enjoyable piece of Oirishry, was composed in 1892 to a commission from the Gaelic Society of America, who received the dedication, and premièred by Seidl in his last Sunday-evening concert of the season, at the Lenox Lyceum on 24th April that year. Herbert himself conducted the *Rhapsody* at the Gaelic Society's 1893 meeting in New York. It is scored for double woodwind with piccolo, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, tuba, strings, harp, percussion and timpani. Herbert strings a series of then-popular Irish melodies together with considerable skill: today's listeners will recognise 'Believe me if all those endearing young charms' and *Garry Owen*, but perhaps only the Irish will pick up *To Sadie's Eyes*; *Come O'er the Sea*; *Rich and Rare Were the Gems She Wore*; and *Erin, Oh Erin*. Herbert finally weaves several of them together in a display of sturdy German contrapuntal expertise.

Tully Potter

## Mark Kosower

Photo: Bonggyun Kim



Mark Kosower began to play the cello at the age of one-and-a-half and later studied with János Starker and Joel Krosnick. As a soloist he has appeared with the Orchestre de Paris, the Rotterdam Philharmonic, the Bamberg Symphony, the Hong Kong Philharmonic, the China National Symphony Orchestra, the National Symphony Orchestra of Taiwan, the Brazilian Symphony Orchestra, and the Venezuela Symphony Orchestra as well as the Cleveland Orchestra, the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, the Ravinia Festival Orchestra, and the symphony orchestras of Detroit, Houston, Indianapolis, Milwaukee, Minnesota, and Seattle among many others. He has collaborated as soloist with preeminent conductors such as Herbert Blomstedt, Christoph Eschenbach, and Franz Welser-Möst. Mark Kosower has appeared in recital at the de Doelen in Rotterdam, on the Great Performers Series at Lincoln Center, at the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, the Aspen Music Festival, and the Philadelphia Chamber Music Society. An Avery Fisher Career Grant recipient, he has been Principal Cello of the Cleveland Orchestra and a faculty member at the Cleveland Institute of Music since 2010 and was formerly solo cellist of the Bamberg Symphony.

## Ulster Orchestra

Photo: Benjamin Ealovega



For almost fifty years the Ulster Orchestra has been at the forefront of musical life in Northern Ireland. Founded in 1966, the orchestra's sixty three full-time musicians form the region's only professional symphony orchestra and celebrates its 50th anniversary in the 2016/17 season. In 2014 the Ulster Orchestra appointed Rafael Payare as its Chief Conductor, joining a distinguished line of past principal conductors including JoAnn Falletta, Bryden Thomson, Vernon Handley, Yan Pascal Tortelier, Dimitry Sitkovetsky, Thierry Fischer and Kenneth Montgomery. The orchestra gives around forty evening and lunchtime concerts each season in its home, the Ulster Hall, and in the Belfast Waterfront, and performs for the BBC Radio 3 invitational concert series at the Ulster Hall and in front of tens of thousands on the Titanic Slipway for the BBC's *Proms in the Park* celebrations each year. The orchestra also participates annually in the Ulster Bank Belfast International Arts Festival.

## JoAnn Falletta

Photo: Guerin Blask



JoAnn Falletta serves as Music Director of the Buffalo Philharmonic and Virginia Symphony and is the Principal Guest Conductor of the Brevard Music Center of North Carolina. She has guest conducted over a hundred orchestras in North America, and many of the most prominent orchestras in Europe, Asia, South America and Africa. She served as Principal Conductor of the Ulster Orchestra from 2011 to 2014, with whom she made her debut at London's prestigious Proms and has recorded music of Gustav Holst, E.J. Moeran and John Knowles Paine. Recipient of the Seaver/National Endowment for the Arts Conductors Award, winner of the Stokowski Competition, and the Toscanini, Ditson and Bruno Walter conducting awards, Falletta has also received twelve ASCAP awards and served on the U.S. National Council on the Arts. A champion of American music, she has presented over five hundred works by American composers including 110 world premières. Her Naxos recordings include the double GRAMMY® Award-winning disc of works by John Corigliano and GRAMMY® nominated discs of works by Tyberg, Dohnányi, Fuchs, Schubert, Respighi, Gershwin, Hailstork and Holst. [www.joannfalletta.com](http://www.joannfalletta.com)

Irish-born Victor Herbert was one of the most celebrated names in American music in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. A cellist, conductor, and composer of light operas, he was also a recording artist. His two *Cello Concertos* are full of graceful melodies, the *First* having a songlike slow movement and a spirited *Polonaise* finale that earned praise at its 1885 première in Stuttgart. The *Second Concerto*, scored for a large orchestra, is more tightly constructed than the *First*. It was hearing this work that inspired Herbert's boss at the National Conservatory in New York, Antonín Dvořák, to write his own great B minor *Cello Concerto*.

Victor  
**HERBERT**  
(1859-1924)

**Cello Concertos Nos. 1 and 2**

<b>Cello Concerto No. 1 in D major, Op. 8 (1884)*</b>	<b>25:28</b>
❶ Allegro con spirito	11:18
❷ Andante – Scherzo – Andante	6:22
❸ Allegro	7:48
<b>Cello Concerto No. 2 in E minor, Op. 30 (1894)*</b>	<b>22:33</b>
❹ Allegro impetuoso	8:21
❺ Lento – Andante tranquillo	7:35
❻ Allegro	6:37
❼ Irish Rhapsody for Grand Orchestra (1892)	15:58

**Mark Kosower, Cello\***  
**Ulster Orchestra • JoAnn Falletta**

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