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JAMIE WALTON

WALTON
Cello Concerto

SHOSTAKOVICH
Cello Concerto No.1

Philharmonia Orchestra
Alexander Briger conductor

WALTON CELLO CONCERTO
SHOSTAKOVICH CELLO CONCERTO NO.1

William Walton (1902 - 1983)

Cello Concerto

1	Allegro moderato	[8.06]
2	Allegro appassionato	[7.02]
3	Lento – Allegro molto (1975 Revision*)	[14.23]

Dmitri Shostakovich (1906 - 1975)

Cello Concerto No.1 in E flat major, Op.107

4	Allegretto	[6.17]
5	Moderato	[11.49]
6	Cadenza	[5.19]
7	Allegro con moto	[5.08]

Solo horn – Nigel Black

Bonus Track – Walton, Cello Concerto:

8	Lento – Allegro molto (1956 Original)	[14.14]

Total timings: [56.15]

** World Première Recording*

JAMIE WALTON CELLO
PHILHARMONIA ORCHESTRA
ALEXANDER BRIGER CONDUCTOR

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Walton
Cello Concerto

After leaving Oxford University in 1920, having failed to pass his degree, it didn't take William Walton more than a couple of years to make his first indelible mark on the British musical scene. 'As a musical joker, he is a jewel of the first order' wrote the eminent critic Ernest Newman, after a performance of the young composer's 'entertainment', *Façade.* Still only in his early twenties, Walton threw in to this miscellany for speaker and instruments every influence he could find in the musical palate of the day: cabaret, the fox-trot, charleston and other popular dances, all the rage at the time, were mixed with ragtime, nascent jazz. Even Stravinsky and Schoenberg make their presence felt through influences from *The Soldier's Tale* and *Pierrot lunaire* respectively. During this period, Walton had been staying with Edith, Osbert and Sacheverell Sitwell. As an elected family member of these well-connected literary types, Walton was introduced to many of the most glittering figures on the arts scene between the wars. He could count Cecil Beaton, Siegfried Sassoon, Lytton Strachey, Noel Coward and Constant Lambert as friends or, at very least, sometime acquaintances and also met some of the major composers of the age, such as Gershwin and Stravinsky. Eager to move on to matters more serious than *Façade*, Walton in the later 1920s and 30s began to develop his own take on more traditional classical forms with his overture, *Portsmouth Point*, the First Symphony, the oratorio, *Belshazzar's Feast* and the Viola Concerto – all of which made speedy inroads into permanently entering the standard repertory.

During the Second World War, Walton set aside his 'serious' compositional side and set to work on a number of patriotic film projects, the most memorable being *Henry V* and *The First of the Few.* The latter of these dramatised the development of the Spitfire fighter plane, and from it Walton extracted the spectacular *Spitfire Prelude and Fugue,* which stands beside his two coronation works, *Crown Imperial* and *Orb and Sceptre* as stalwarts of any celebration of Britishness to this day. After the war, Walton's fame as arguably Britain's key composer since Vaughan Williams was gradually eroded by the inexorable rise of Benjamin Britten who was achieving great success with his operas. On a level of acquaintance and musical respect, Walton and Britten were generally on good terms, but there was also a little sliver of envy in Walton for the younger composer's level of fame and perceived protean productivity. Walton

himself often complained about the difficulty he experienced when trying to set a work down on manuscript paper. But he was steadily broadening his own niche with subtle developments in tone and sophistication which the Cello Concerto and other works, such as the opera *Troilus and Cressida,* the *Variations on a Theme by Hindemith* and the Second Symphony attest. As to the perception that Walton did indeed find composition a painful process, his wife Susana seems to both confirm and deny this in the same sentence when writing about the Cello Concerto itself:

> '[Walton] thought of the cello as a melancholy instrument, full of soul; accordingly, he wrote a rather sad tune to the opening...He certainly had a special affection for the Cello Concerto as it had come very spontaneously, and he felt it was the closest to his personality'.

Following the success of the Viola and Violin Concertos, Walton must have had high hopes for his third essay in the genre. After all, the extrovert, vivid Violin Concerto had been commissioned by the great Jascha Heifetz, who both premiered it and recorded it for the first time. The earlier Viola Concerto had been written for the virtuoso, Lionel Tertis, but was eventually performed, to much critical acclaim by none other than Paul Hindemith. Composed between February and October 1956, the Cello Concerto was likewise commissioned and first performed by another instrumental titan, in this case Gregor Piatigorsky. The premiere took place in Boston, on 25 January 1957, with Charles Munch conducting the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Walton's reputation in America was immediately vastly enhanced by the occasion. However, back in London, there was a rather mixed reception to it, as there had been to the composer's previous work, *Troilus and Cressida*. For his part, Walton was very happy with the work. Piatigorsky, though, entered into lengthy correspondence with Walton over the matter of how the concerto should end, and the composer, interviewed in 1977, admitted that, 'I didn't have any [doubts] till many years later. Then I thought, 'Perhaps he's right'.' The present recording resurrects a 22 bar replacement conclusion to the work, which was composed in 1974, fulfilling Piatigorsky's request for 'a less melancholy ending'. Approved by Piatigorsky, he alas did not live long enough to publicly premiere the revision and it has remained unrecorded and unperformed until now. In a recording first, Jamie Walton has elected to restore William Walton's final thoughts on the concerto whilst also setting down the original ending, which appears in this recording as a bonus track.

The first movement's opening 'tick-tock' vacillation immediately makes the listener think of Walton the film composer, such is its portentous effect. But before long the cello slowly unwinds a beautiful, long, dark melody which, together with the 'ticking', provides the main meat and mood of the movement. The following *Allegro* is a very nervy affair with virtuosic writing for the soloist in music which flashes and flickers in a manner akin to many of Walton's earlier compositions. The *finale*, a theme with variations, or 'improvisations' as the composer labelled them, has the solo cello and orchestra essentially alternate the variations. A spectacular array of moods, from tender to fierce and rhapsodic to restrained, are essayed before the cello ends the drama by dropping down to its lowest open string, allowing the orchestra to conclude the work in a mood of easeful repose.

Shostakovich
Cello Concerto No.1 in E flat, Op.107

As a 27-year-old, in 1934, Shostakovich had a runaway, worldwide 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'. In 1936, with the arts now under centralized control under the All-Union Committee on Artistic Affairs, the tide was turning against any composers with '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'. A few days later, 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.

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. Shostakovich managed to claw his way out of this horror by presenting his Fifth Symphony – 'a Soviet artist's creative response to justified criticism'. The triumph was immediate and the applause tumultuously greeted Shostakovich's rehabilitation as a truly great Soviet artist. Even the critics were eventually effusive in their praise, affirming that the composer was being invited back into the party fold.

After a second period of fresh charges of 'formalism' in 1948, Shostakovich was again cast into the wilderness until a relaxation of the artistic manacles followed the death of Stalin in 1953. By late 1954, Shostakovich's yo-yoing career was back in the ascendant after being awarded the title of People's Artist of the USSR. With Nikita Krushchev now in power and de-Stalinisation in the air, the dark Winter of Stalin appeared to be thawing into a new spring for the Soviet Union. In 1958 Shostakovich was awarded the Lenin Prize for his Eleventh Symphony, despite it often being thought of as apparently disguised protest against Russia's brutal demolition of the Hungarian uprising of October 1956. It appealed to the authorities, despite its dark, meditative nature, and was made palatable to the public only through its many moments of painful beauty, some Tchaikovskian touches and very knowing deployment of melodies from famous revolutionary songs. Shostakovich's return to fame, and, if not fortune, then the ability to lay claim to the benefits of once again being the great Soviet composer of choice, were not to be sniffed at. But, times were still difficult, and in 1957, after Boris Pasternak's Western publication of his novel *Doctor Zhivago*, which truthfully depicts Stalin's years, life became once again stressful for the whole artistic community. Unable or unwilling to protest, Shostakovich retreated into composition and produced one his finest large-scale works, the Cello Concerto No.1 in E flat, Op.107.

Shostakovich and the great cellist, Mstislav Rostropovich first met at the Moscow conservatory where the cellist (then also a budding composer)

entered Shostakovich's 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 helping to fund 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. Rostropovich, in interviews, speaks of his older friend with a mixture of awe and admiration. On his days spent as a student playing duets and learning composition from Shostakovich he opines, 'That was a real musical university for my life'. And in interview after interview similar emerges Shostakovich's 'deep humanity towards everything - in life, in his relationships and in his art'. On his plans to ask the composer to write a concerto for him, Rostropovich later recalled:

> Once, when talking with Nina Vasilyevna, [Shostakovich's] late wife, I raised the question of a commission: 'Nina Vasilyevna, what should I do to make Dmitri Dmitriyevich write me a cello concerto?' She answered, 'Slava, if you want Dmitri Dmitriyevich to write something for you, the only recipe I can give you is this - never ask him or talk to him about it.'

Shostakovich was no different from all great composers who are moved by the great talents of performing artists to write for them, and so Rostropovich eventually got his concerto and performed it with the Leningrad Philharmonic Orchestra under the direction of Evgeni Mravinsky on 4 October 1959. One of the great cello concertos of the last century or so, Shostakovich, when asked about meaning in the piece countered gnomically that he merely 'took a simple, tiny theme and tried to develop it'. This is a spine-tingling, neurotic work, from one who was prone to nerves and paranoia, and understandably so given the privations he had suffered under such a highly paranoid regime. But it is also remarkably spirited rather than depressive in character and holds the listener enthralled throughout.

The first movement, according to Shostakovich, is a 'jocular march' – but there's not a lot of straight-ahead humour to be found here. Instead, an electric, frenetic energy which sparks up immediately from the cello's opening spiky four-note motif. The only brass instrument in the score, a lone French horn plays an important, almost *concertante* role in the whole work - sometimes shadowing the solo cello, sometimes commentating, but never straying too far from

the soloist. The three remaining movements are played without a break; the slow movement opening with the horn in lyric mode, setting the elegiac tone for the section. This leads directly into the cadenza, which is long enough to constitute a movement in itself. The *finale* is a driven affair in which Shostakovich ironically quotes the Georgian song *Suliko*, apparently much favoured by Stalin. Grimness and frenzy are the touchstones again, with the horn returning to reclaim the opening four-note motif of the work which then entangles with the finale's main theme and worked on every more stridently until the bang of the timpani brings the concerto to a sudden close.

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BIOGRAPHIES

JAMIE WALTON

Becoming renowned for his purity of tone and uncompromising musical nature, Jamie Walton is now being compared by critics to some of the great 'cellists of the past. He has appeared throughout much of Europe, the USA, New Zealand, Australia and the UK in some of the world's most prestigious concert halls and festivals. He has also given regular appearances and broadcasts in chamber music, concertos and recitals in Vienna. During a recent antipodean tour of recitals and concertos broadcast on national radio and television Jamie was the first 'cellist to give a solo recital in the new Melbourne Recital Centre.

He and his pianist Daniel Grimwood appear regularly at Wigmore Hall and Symphony Hall, Birmingham where their debut was a recital of Chopin for the Chopin festival, sharing the evening with Krystian Zimerman. These led to concertos there with the English Symphony Orchestra and the Orchestra of the Welsh National Opera. They have also appeared in recital at the Bridgewater Hall, Fairfield Hall, Kings Place, Cadogan Hall and St John's, Smith Square regularly as well as at the Chateauville Foundation, Virginia – a personal invite from Maestro Lorin Maazel.

Jamie's increasing discography is consistently receiving the highest critical acclaim and he is gaining a reputation as a supreme interpreter of the repertoire. Regularly voted CD of the month and given 5 stars by the likes of the Telegraph, the Times and BBC Music Magazine, the start of his concerto series with the Philharmonia (Saint-Saëns concertos) was voted onto Radio 3's listening booth, going on to receive further ecstatic reviews – Classic FM magazine described his Saint-Saëns as "The finest around". Developing a strong rapport in both performance and recording with this great orchestra, his Elgar and Myaskovsky disc was internationally praised, comparing Jamie to Rostropovich (International Record Review) and Tortelier. As part of an Anglo-Russian trilogy that is completed with this recording, in October 2008 Signum Classics also released Shostakovich Concerto No.2 and Britten's Cello Symphony with the same forces. His recording career has also taken off with his pianist Daniel Grimwood; their recent Signum Classics release of the Rachmaninov and Grieg sonatas was Chamber Choice CD of the month in BBC Music Magazine. A JCL CD of Brahms, Strauss and Thuille added to the Romantic sonata series which is to be continued with Signum Classics releases of sonatas by Chopin and Saint-Saëns (No.2), a French disc of Vierne, Debussy and Poulenc as well as sonatas by Britten, Shostakovich, Prokofiev, Myaskovsky, Schumann and Janáček. Future recording projects include the Dvorak and Schumann concertos with the Philharmonia and to record/film the three solo suites by Britten as part of a box set to celebrate Britten's complete works for 'cello.

He studied at Wells Cathedral School and the RNCM with Margaret Moncrieff before taking private tuition with William Pleeth who wrote of Jamie: "He is a cellist of outstanding performance ability. Combining warmth of tone with a technical command that reaches dazzling proportions, he leaves little doubt as the success that lies ahead of him – he is a musician of great integrity whose performance gives great pleasure."

As a member of the Worshipful Company of Musicians, he was recently elected into the Freedom of the City of London, having performed for HRH The Prince of Wales. Passionate about chamber music and the landscape of North Yorkshire, Jamie launched the first North York Moors Chamber Music Festival in August 2009 to sell out audiences and is now an annual event having sold out in its second year. For more information please visit **www.nymchambermusicfestival.org** and **www.jamiewalton.com.**

THE PHILHARMONIA ORCHESTRA

The Philharmonia Orchestra is one of the world's great orchestras. Acknowledged as the UK's foremost musical pioneer, with an extraordinary recording legacy, the Philharmonia leads the field for its quality of playing, and for its innovative approach to audience development, residencies, music education and the use of new technologies in reaching a global audience. Together with its relationships with the world's most sought-after artists, most importantly its Principal Conductor and Artistic Advisor Esa-Pekka Salonen, the Philharmonia Orchestra is at the heart of British musical life.

Today, the Philharmonia has the greatest claim of any orchestra to be the UK's National Orchestra. It is committed to presenting the same quality, live music-making in venues throughout the country as it brings to London and the great concert halls of the world. In 2008/09 the Orchestra performed more than 200 concerts, as well as presenting chamber performances by the Soloists of the Philharmonia Orchestra, and recording scores for films, CDs and computer games. For more than 13 years now the Orchestra's work has been underpinned by its much admired UK and International Residency Programme, which began in 1995 with the launch of its residencies at the Bedford Corn Exchange and London's Southbank Centre. During 2008/09 the Orchestra not only performed more than 45 concerts at Southbank Centre's refurbished Royal Festival Hall, but also celebrated its 12th year as Resident Orchestra of De Montfort Hall in Leicester, its ninth year as Orchestra in Partnership at the Anvil in Basingstoke and the second year of a new residency in Kent and the Thames Gateway, based in Canterbury. The Orchestra's extensive touring schedule also included performances in more than 40 of the finest international concert halls in Europe and the Far East, many of them as part of Salonen's major project, City of Dreams, exploring the music and culture of Vienna between 1900 and 1935.

ALEXANDER BRIGER

Alexander studied in Sydney and Munich and won 1st prize at the International Competition for Conductors in the Czech Republic in 1993. He later worked closely with Sir Charles Mackerras and Pierre Boulez and made his debut with Opera Australia in 1998 conducting *Jenufa.* Operatic work has since included *Madama Butterfly, Cosi fan tutte, Cunning Little Vixen, A Midsummer Night's Dream and Le Nozze di Figaro* (Opera Australia), *The Rape of Lucretia* (ROH, Covent Garden), *Die Zauberflöte (Glyndebourne Festival), Rigoletto and Makropulos Case* (English National Opera), *Cunning Little Vixen* (Aix-en-Provence), *From the House of the Dead* (Canadian Opera Company), *Tales of Hoffmann* (Royal Danish Opera), *Bartered Bride* (Royal Swedish Opera), *Pique Dame* (Komische Oper, Berlin), *La Boheme* (State Opera of South Australia), Bartok ballets (Opera du Rhin) as well as the premiere of Simon Holt's *Who put Bella in the Wych'elm* for the Aldeburgh Festival.

He has performed regularly with the Philharmonia, the London Philharmonic Orchestra, opening their 2003 'Friday Series' in London and touring with

them to China in 2003/4; and the Birmingham Contemporary Music Group, with whom he made his BBC Proms and Berlin Festival debuts.

He has also worked with the Orchestre de Paris for the opening of the 2004 "Musica Festival", Scottish Chamber Orchestra, with whom he conducted the final concert of the 2004 Edinburgh Festival, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Konzerthaus Orchester, Berlin, Rotterdam Philharmonic, Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, BBC Symphony Orchestra, BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, Gothenburg Symphony, Swedish Radio Orchestra, Danish Sinfonietta, Orchestre National du Capitol de Toulouse, Frankfurt Radio Orchestra, Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie, Academy of St Martin in the Fields, Salzburg Mozarteum, Salzburg Camerata, Ensemble InterContemporain, London Sinfonietta, collaborating with Peter Sellars and pianist Helene Grimaud for the premiere of Arvo Pärt's *Lament Tate*, Sydney, Melbourne and Western Australian Symphony Orchestras and Japanese Virtuoso Symphony, Nordwestdeustsche Philharmonie and Monte Carlo Philharmonic.

Alexander is also Artistic and Music Director of The Australian World Orchestra, which he founded in 2009.

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Recording Engineer - Andrew Mellor
Assistant - Alex Foster

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WALTON CELLO CONCERTO
SHOSTAKOVICH CELLO CONCERTO NO.1

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Total timings: [56.15]

** World Première Recording*

Jamie Walton completes his Anglo-Russian trilogy on Signum with these stunning performances of concertos by William Walton and Dmitri Shostakovich with Alexander Briger and the Philharmonia Orchestra - featuring the **World Première Recording** of Walton's 1975 revision of the Cello Concerto's final movement.

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