

teaching is that he felt that he gained as much from the teaching experience as his students did.

Pierre Fournier (1906–1986) was born in Paris on June 24, and known in his lifetime as “the aristocrat of cellists,” because of his lyrical playing, and for his impeccable artistic sensitivity.

Fournier was the son of a French army general, and as a child was taught piano by his mother. At the age of nine he suffered a mild case of polio, and lost some of the dexterity in his legs and feet. No longer able to master the use of the piano pedals, he searched for another musical instrument, and turned to the cello.

He quickly made good progress on his new instrument, and was able to win entrance to the Paris Conservatoire, where he became a pupil of Paul Bazelaire, and later Anton Hekking. He graduated at the age of seventeen, in the year 1923. Maurice Marechal called him “the cellist of the future.” Even at such a young age, Fournier had tremendous virtuosity, and was famous for his bowing facility. Fournier was a friend of another great French cellist, Tortelier. Once, meeting backstage after a recital by Tortelier, Pierre said to him, “Paul, I wish I had your left hand.” Tortelier replied, “Pierre, I wish I had your right arm!”

Fournier became well known in 1925 after a successful performance with the Edouard Colonne Orchestra in Paris, and began to give concerts all over Europe. Fournier played with all the great musicians of his time, including Cortot, Thibaud, Furtwangler, Karajan and Kubelik. Together with Artur Schnabel, Szigeti and Primrose he recorded nearly all of the chamber music of Brahms and Schubert. Unfortunately the acetates on which the BBC recorded the series deteriorated before they could be copied to a more durable medium.

In the years 1937–1939 Fournier directed the cello class at the Ecole Normale, and from 1941–1949 also at the Paris Conservatoire.

Fournier made his first tour of the USA in 1948 to great acclaim in New York and Boston. Virgil Thomson wrote in the New York Herald Tribune, “I do not know his superior among living cellists, nor any...who give one more profoundly the feeling of having been present at music-making.” His performing career occupied more and more of his time, and he had to resign from his teaching post in Paris. In 1959 he appeared for the first time in Moscow, where he played most of the standard concertos of the cello repertoire.

He enjoyed modern music, as well as classical. Many modern composers wrote works for him, including Martinu, Martinon and Poulenc. As a teacher Fournier insisted that his students develop a smooth tone, and a high elbow for the right arm. He believed that the Sevcik violin exercises were valuable for cellists who wanted to perfect bowing technique.

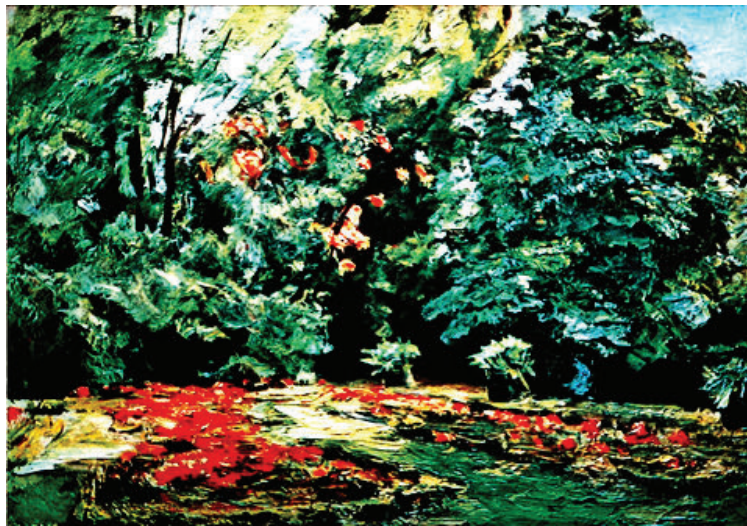
In 1956 he made his home with his family in Switzerland, but retained his French citizenship. His son, Jean Pierre Fournier was a fine pianist, and often performed cello/piano sonatas together with his father. In 1963 he was made a member, and a year later an officer, of the French Legion of Honor.

Fournier was still performing and playing well at the age of 78, when he gave a recital at the Queen Elizabeth Hall in London. He died in January 1986, at the age of 80. In 1988 the Royal Northern College of Music began an International Cello Festival to honour his memory.



Johannes Brahms

Double Concerto In A Minor, Op. 102



David Oistrakh, Violin Pierre Fournier, Cello

Philharmonia Orchestra • Alceo Galliera

Brahms wrote this work during the summer of 1887, and conducted the premiere himself on October 18 in Cologne, with Joseph Joachim and Robert Hausmann as, respectively, the violin and cello soloists. Brahms had just turned 20 when he met Joseph Joachim (1831-1907), already a celebrated violinist at 22 and destined to be acclaimed also as a composer, conductor, and educator. It was Joachim who commended his new friend to Robert and Clara Schumann, thereby assuring his celebrity. For 30 years the two were fast friends despite the distance usually separating their power bases: Joachim's in Berlin, Brahms' in Vienna finally. "Jussuf," however, had a weakness -- obsessive jealousy of his wife Amalie, whom he accused of adultery in 1881 with his (and Brahms' and Dvorák's) publisher, Fritz Simrock. Brahms disbelieved, and said so in a consolatory letter to Frau Joachim. During divorce hearings she produced this letter in court, and the judge agreed publicly with its contents.

As a result, Joachim cut off communications with Brahms for six years, although he continued to play the composer's music. Finally, seeking to repair the damage, Brahms composed the "Double" Concerto as a peace offering; the effort was successful, although their camaraderie of former years was never fully restored. In addition to composing the "Thun" sonatas of 1886 for violin and cello, Brahms had been studying Baroque concerti grossi, so the sound of string instruments was in his ear. This concerto would be his last orchestral work.

From the Swiss vacation resort of Hofstetter on Lake Thun, he wrote to several persons about his "strange flight of fancy...for fiddle and cello." But first he sent a postcard to Joachim, received on July 19, 1887, by which time Brahms had completed the work and was copying solo parts. When Joachim responded enthusiastically by return mail, Brahms asked him to arrange a play-through with Robert Hausmann, who had introduced the Op. 99 Cello Sonata a few months prior; Brahms himself would accompany on the piano. This took place at Clara Schumann's home in Baden-Baden in September (her diary notes that "Brahms and Joachim have spoken to one another again after years of silence"). Although neither the Cologne premiere nor the first Vienna performance was a success, the concerto finally entered the repertory, even if it never enjoyed the success of his violin concerto or the two for piano.

The opening Allegro (A minor; 4/4) begins with the kernel of the main theme, then a cello "recitative," and finally the kernel of a more lyrical second theme. Next, the violin has a turn, though the cello intrudes after five bars, following which the orchestra finally gets to play a 44-bar exposition of themes already previewed. Soloists perform the traditional second exposition, but there is not, in the development or recapitulation, a lot of unison playing. Throughout, the soloists are not stars with a supporting cast, but merely leading characters in a primarily orchestral drama. Unison passages appear in the A and A' sections of the sweetly autumnal, folk-flavored, song-form Andante in D major (3/4 time). The solo instruments dovetail or briefly overlap in an F major middle section, until a magical enharmonic transition leads back to unison playing.

The lighthearted but "not too lively" rondo (*vivace non troppo*) has repeating A sections with a staccato-marcato rhythm that wrong-headed playing can accelerate and by so doing adulterate. The B section is broader, with chords on the cello that the violin echoes. The C section, in F major, is similarly broad but longer, before the A material returns one more time, with a jaunty tilt of the cap and a kind of jig

-- all the more entertaining in light of Brahms' short stature, bushy beard and, by then, Santa-like corpulence.

David Oistrakh is considered the premiere violinist of mid-20th century Soviet Union. His recorded legacy includes nearly the entire standard violin repertory up to and including Prokofiev and Bartók. Oistrakh's violin studies began in 1913 with famed teacher Pyotr Stolyarsky. Later he officially joined Stolyarsky's class at the Odessa Conservatory, graduating in 1926 by playing Prokofiev's First Violin Concerto. Performances of the Glazunov concerto in Odessa and Kiev in 1927, and a 1928 debut in Leningrad (Tchaikovsky concerto), gave Oistrakh the confidence to move to Moscow. He made his premiere there in early 1929, but the event went largely unnoticed. In 1934, however, after several years of patiently refining his craft, Oistrakh was invited to join the Moscow Conservatory, eventually rising to the rank of full professor in 1939.

Meanwhile, Oistrakh was gaining success on the competition circuit, winning the 1930 All-Ukrainian contest, and the All-Soviet competition three years later. In 1935 he took second prize at the Wieniawski competition. In 1937 the Soviet government sent the now veteran violinist to Brussels to compete in the International Ysaÿe Competition, where he took home first prize.

With his victory in Brussels, Soviet composers began to take notice of their young compatriot, enabling Oistrakh to work closely with Myaskovsky and Khachaturian on their concertos in 1939 and 1940, respectively. In addition, his close friendship with Shostakovich led the composer to write two concertos for the instrument (the first of which Oistrakh played at his, and its, triumphant American premiere in 1955). During the 1940s Oistrakh's active performing schedule took him across the Soviet Union but his international career had to wait until the 1950s, when the political climate had cooled enough for Soviet artists to be welcomed in the capitals of the West.

The remaining decades of Oistrakh's life were devoted to maintaining the highest possible standards of excellence throughout an exhausting touring schedule (he returned to the U.S. six times in the 1960s), and he began a small but successful sideline career as an orchestral conductor. His death came suddenly in Amsterdam in 1974, during a cycle of Brahms concerts in which he both played and conducted. Oistrakh's unexpected death left a void in the Soviet musical world which was never really filled.

Throughout his career David Oistrakh was known for his honest, warm personality; he developed close friendships with many of the leading musicians of the day. His violin technique was virtually flawless, though he never allowed purely physical matters to dominate his musical performances. He always demanded of himself (and his students) that musical proficiency, intelligence, and emotion be in balance, regardless of the particular style. Oistrakh felt that a violinist's essence was communicated through clever and subtle use of the bow, and not through overly expressive use of vibrato. To this end he developed a remarkably relaxed, flexible right arm technique, capable of producing the most delicate expressive nuances, but equally capable of generating great volume and projection.

As a teacher, David Oistrakh maintained that a teacher should do no more than necessary to help guide the student toward his or her own solutions to technical and interpretive difficulties. He rarely played during lessons, fearing that he might distract the student from developing a more individual approach, and even encouraged his students to challenge his interpretations. Perhaps the best evidence of the Oistrakh's gift for

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- 1 First Movement: Allegro**
- 2 Second Movement: Andante**
- 3 Third Movement: Vivaco Non Troppo
Poco Meno - Allegro - Tempo Primo**
- Total Time: 33:04**

Recorded by EMI 1957
Transferred from a 15ips 2-track tape



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