

High virtuosity is demanded of the cellist, as in the Sixth, Seventh, and Eighth symphonies (in which Haydn provided solos especially for Weigl). What Haydn did not provide are authenticated cadenzas for the first and second movements; cellists generally employ either anonymous eighteenth century cadenzas, or those prepared since 1961. Composer-conductor Benjamin Britten, working with the English Chamber Orchestra, decided to add this affable and energetic work to his legacy of collaborations with the legendary, former-Soviet cellist Rostropovich. Britten's modern-sounding cadenzas for Haydn's Cello Concerto in C major complete this unusually fruitful relationship between two sides of the Iron Curtain. The display passages and long, lyrical melodies provide Rostropovich ample opportunities to demonstrate those qualities that made him the world's leading exponent of his chosen instrument.

Recording Info:

Transferred from a London 4-track tape

Recorded by Decca

Producer: John Culshaw / Engineer: Gordon Parry

July 16-18 1964 Venue: Kingsway Hall, London

Britten Symphony For Cello And Orchestra
Haydn Concerto In C For Cello And Orchestra
Mstislav Rostropovich, cello
The English Chamber Orchestra
Conducted By Benjamin Britten



Rostropovich had emerged as one of the most significant musicians in the Soviet Union when he made his Western debut in Liège in 1963. Through his friend and teacher Dmitri Shostakovich, he was introduced to Benjamin Britten. Britten was inspired by him to compose his Cello Symphony, premiered in Moscow in March 1964, and to follow it with the three Cello Suites – arguably the most important body of solo cello music since Bach.

Britten himself leads the recording of the Cello Symphony with Mstislav Rostropovich, for whom Britten composed the piece in 1963. This recording was made not long after the premiere. The brooding quality of this recording has never been surpassed, particularly the forced jubilation of the Passacaglia. Mstislav Rostropovich plays with an exceptionally beautiful tone and the dynamics of his playing, traversing difficult pizzicatos and his expressive pianissimo are a marvel.

Benjamin Britten's Cello Symphony is one of the finest pieces for cello and orchestra ever written and it is Britten's finest orchestral work. The gnarly mood and pessimistic tone of the first movement are caught brilliantly by Rostropovich with the completely idiomatic accompani-

ment of the English Chamber Orchestra under the composer himself. The ghostly 2nd movement and impassioned 3rd movement are also played to the hilt. Rostropovich's limitless technique is on display in the final movement where cello and orchestra begin a passacaglia with great weight, bringing this masterpiece to a satisfying conclusion. Rostropovich was a great exponent of Britten's music and his love for the piece really shines through here. Mstislav Rostropovich's exuberance and profound, passionate intensity as a musician and as a person are powerfully reflected in the music. Britten did not write a great deal for instruments alone. The Cello Symphony is a late piece, intended as if fate had allowed it to be the first of a succession of compositions for Rostropovich. We have Rostropovich in a classic recording of Britten's Cello Symphony. I would highly recommend this recording for fans of Britten's music.

Composed between 1761 and 1765 for Joseph Weigl, a gifted cellist in Haydn's Esterházy orchestra, the Concerto in C Major was presumed lost until 1961, when it turned up the National Museum in Prague among documents originally from Radenin Castle. *(continued on back)*

Britten Symphony For Cello And Orchestra

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Britten Symphony For Cello And Orchestra

- 01 Allegro maestoso
- 02 Presto inquieto
- 03 Adagio – cadenza ad lib
- 04 Passacaglia: Andante allegro

Haydn Concerto In C For Cello And Orchestra

- 05 Adagio
- 06 Allegro molto
- 07 Adagio

Please Note: In the interest of preserving the superb sound quality of these historic recordings, they have been preserved in their original, pristine state for maximum fidelity. Transferred from commercially released, analog reel-to-reel tapes (some of which are more than 50 years old), the recordings themselves can be subject to certain "artifacts" which are an inseparable part of the original analog recording process, such as tape "hiss" or other defects, and these may be audible on certain music tracks.

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