

Gregor Piatigorsky began playing the cello at the age of seven and was admitted to the Moscow Conservatory at nine, studying there with Alfred von Glehn. In 1919, he joined the Lenin Quartet and was appointed principal cellist of the Bol'shoi Theater Orchestra. In 1921, Piatigorsky left the Soviet Union, going to Leipzig by way of Warsaw, and studied for a time with Julius Klengel. Furtwängler appointed him principal cellist of the Berlin Philharmonic in 1924 where he came into contact with the leading German musicians of the time, including Schnabel and Flesch, with whom he formed a trio. In 1928, Piatigorsky left Berlin to concentrate on a solo career, which began triumphantly with his New York debut in 1929. Although Piatigorsky concertized regularly as a soloist, he continued his activity as a chamber musician. Starting in 1930, he formed a trio with Horowitz and Milstein, and later, in 1949 with Heifetz and Rubinstein. In 1961, Piatigorsky and Heifetz formed a chamber music series in Los Angeles, much of which was recorded and remains among the treasures of chamber music performances.

For many years Piatigorsky directed the chamber music program at Tanglewood, helped found the Meadowmount School, succeeded Emanuel Feuermann as professor of cello at the Curtis Institute, and in 1962 became a professor at the University of Southern California. His legacy as a teacher remains a powerful fixture in the world of cello playing; his famous students include Erling Blöndal Bengtsson, Mischa Maisky, and Nathaniel Rosen, among many others. Piatigorsky was known for his Romantic expressiveness and virtuosic flair and was at his best in the big 19th and early 20th century concerto repertory. He premiered works by Walton, Hindemith, and Castelnuovo-Tedesco, published a number of original works and arrangements for the cello, and collaborated with Stravinsky on his Suite Italienne. Widely revered and honored, Piatigorsky was one of the most important and influential musicians of his generation.

# Dvořák Concerto For Cello And Orchestra



**Gregor Piatigorsky, cello**

**Charles Munch • Boston Symphony Orchestra**

In 1865, early in his career, Dvořák started a Cello Concerto in A major (B. 10). The piece was written for Ludevít Peer, whom he knew well from the Provisional Theatre Orchestra in which they both played. He handed the cello score (with piano accompaniment) over to Peer for review but neither bothered to finish the piece. It was recovered from his estate in 1925.

Hanuš Wihan, among others, had asked for a cello concerto for quite some time, but Dvořák always refused, stating that the cello was a fine orchestral instrument but totally insufficient for a solo concerto. According to Josef Michl, Dvořák was fond of the middle register, but complained about a nasal high register and a mumbling bass. In a letter to a friend, Dvořák wrote that he himself was probably most surprised by his decision to write a cello concerto despite these long held reservations.

Dvořák wrote the concerto while in New York City for his third term as the Director of the National Conservatory. In 1894 one of the teachers at the Conservatory, Victor Herbert, also a composer, finished his Cello Concerto No. 2 in E minor, Op. 30, and premiered it in a series of concerts, commencing on 9 March. Dvořák heard at least two performances of the piece and was inspired to fulfill Wihan's request in composing a cello concerto of his own. Herbert had been principal cellist in the orchestra that premiered Dvořák's "New World" Symphony on 16 December 1893.

Herbert's middle movement was in B minor, which may have inspired Dvořák to write his concerto in the same key. It was started on 8 November 1894 and completed on 9 February 1895.

After seeing the score, Hanuš Wihan made various suggestions for improvement, including two cadenzas, one at the end of the third movement. But Dvořák accepted only a few minor changes and neither of the cadenzas. The third movement was a tribute to his sister-in-law, Josefina Kaunitzova, née Čermakova, who had written him a letter in November 1894 saying she was seriously ill. Specifically, the slow, wistful section, before the triumphant ending, quotes his song "Leave Me Alone (Kéž duch můj sám)", Op. 82, B.157, No. 1, a favorite of hers. She died in May 1895, after which the concerto was further revised.

I give you my work only if you will promise me that no one – not even my friend Wihan – shall make any alteration in it without my knowledge and permission, also that there be no cadenza such as Wihan has made in the last movement; and that its form shall be as I have felt it and thought it out.

The finale, he wrote, should close gradually with a diminuendo "like a breath ... then there is a crescendo, and the last measures are taken up by the orchestra, ending stormily. That was my idea, and from it I cannot recede".

# **Dvořák Concerto For Cello And Orchestra**

**Cello – Gregor Piatigorsky**

**Charles Munch Boston Symphony Orchestra**

**1 Allegro 15:45**

**2 Adagio Ma Non Troppo 13:13**

**3 Finale: Allegro Moderato 13:03**

**Total Time: 42:01**

**Recorded 1957 by RCA**

**Engineer – John Crawford Producer – Max Wilcox**



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