AITCHISON MNATZAGANIAN

CELLO MAKERS RESTORERS & DEALERS

SPRING NEWS FOR CELLISTS 2024

Cello Enterprise: Raphael Wallfish

Raphael Wallfisch is renowned for his vibrant musicianship on the concert platform and recording studio, with a discography of over 80 recordings with a wealth of different companies. This February he recorded the complete orchestral works for cello by the Dutch composer Henriëtte Bosmans (1895–1952) with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra. This is the latest project in his *Voices from the Wilderness* series, a survey of cello works by composers who were silenced by the Third Reich.

On pages two and three, Raphael describes what attracted him to Bosmans' work, and the source of the energy and inspiration required to bring a composer out of obscurity. Raphael's recordings will be published in 2025.

Bilbao Violin Making School

This April, Robin is spending a week at BELE, the Basque Country School of Violin Making in Bilbao. He has been invited to teach a five-day course for undergraduate students on model selection and set-up in cello making and a weekend workshop for a group of professional makers from Spain, Italy and Germany, with the same theme.

Cherubim Music Trust

The Cherubim Music Trust loans professional-quality orchestral instruments to advanced music students who cannot afford one to match their ability. Now in its 22nd year, Cherubim is the custodian of over 50 instruments, including eight cellos by makers including Alexander Smillie, Collin-Mezin, Michael Lindsay, Robin Aitchison and John Corsby. They also endeavour to provide support and performance opportunities for awardees. All their cellos are currently out on loan, but the trust is continually expanding and adding to its collection to assist exceptional young players, so it's well worth being in touch with them.

Frieda Belinfante and Henriëtte Bosmans

'I've always been interested in the work of undeservedly unknown composers. My inspiration was my pianist father, who was always looking for and performing the work of obscure composers. He was also very active in promoting the work of British contemporary composers such as Kenneth Leighton and Frank Bridge.

So, when I discover cello repertoire which I passionately believe in and want to help make better known, it gives me a lot of energy and motivation. It's a lot of fun, as well as a lot of hard work to get it into the public realm, but if you believe in something very strongly, you don't just let it go. Even established pieces such as Finzi's cello concerto, which deserve to be much better known, take a lot of persuasion from promoters to perform in concert halls. For instance, the late Richard Hickox and I went directly to Nicholas Kenyon, who was at the time the Director of the Proms, to persuade him to programme the great Finzi cello concerto in an all-English programme, in Finzi's centenary year. We succeeded, and it was one of the highlights of my performing life.

The cello is a great instrument, as we know, and cellists have great camaraderie – just look at how many cello festivals there are in comparison with violin festivals! It's funny, but true, that when Heifetz asked Rachmaninov why he hadn't written a violin sonata, he replied: 'Why should I, when there is the cello?'

As the cello repertoire is relatively small compared to that of the violin, we cellists tend to be very interested in undiscovered music and arrangements for the cello, as well as new music, much of which is commissioned by and often performed at cello festivals. The whole experience of being a cellist is inspirational. I want to play the instrument and find things to play on it – that's certainly what drives me forward. It's all to do with the love of the instrument – and the music is out there if you look for it.

Friends know that I'm always looking out for unknown composers. About 8 years ago, a Dutch cellist colleague told me about Henriëtte Bosmans. I learned that Bosmans' father was a fine cellist and her mother a pianist; Bosmans herself was a concert pianist as well as a composer. Her first partner, Frieda Belinfante, was a cellist and conductor and Bosmans wrote two cello concerti, the second of which was dedicated to Belinfante. I googled and listened and was so struck by Bosmans' work that I realised I must research her cello works. The writing for cello in all three concertante works, the *Sonata* for cello and piano, the shorter works with the piano and the *Nocturne with Harp* is perfectly idiomatic and shows her deep identification with the cello. The cello part in all the pieces is incredibly cellistic and full of thrilling moments, with echoes of the best things in the core repertoire, including Dvorak.

Henriëtte Bosmans, composer and pianist 1894–1952

I was determined to bring all these beautiful works together for the first time.

Bosmans is the 11th in a series of Jewish composers whose work I've recorded for a series *Voices in the Wilderness*, which includes wonderful composers such as Korngold, Hans Gál, Castelnuovo Tedesco, Goldschmidt, Reizenstein and Karl Weigl. The record company for this project is CPO, who are based in Osnabruck, Germany, and they have been tremendously supportive.

Every project is a long journey; for instance, finding funding for recordings is of course very hard. One has to talk to a lot of people with one's ideas in order to get anywhere. Fortunately, I found two foundations in Holland that support Dutch music and they offered to help. Understandably, they wanted me to work with Dutch musicians, but the problem was that Dutch orchestras weren't interested in making it happen! Luckily, the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra in Glasgow were very interested to record Bosmans with me. The fact that she was a female composer also helped to attract much needed extra funding.

The project came to fruition in Glasgow in February, when I worked with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra and the wonderful Dutch conductor and pianist Ed Spanjaard to record all Bosmans' orchestral cello repertoire. It was a huge advantage to record in the BSSO's base in City Hall Glasgow, which has fine acoustics, and to work with their resident sound engineers who know the orchestra well.

On the first day, Ed outlined who Bosmans was, and warned everyone that in the earlier unpublished work there may be some wrong notes or problems of balance which would have to be edited on the spot. It was a voyage of discovery for everyone, as no one knew the pieces or the composer.

Only the *Poème*, the shorter of the three works, had been recorded before. The second cello concerto has been played sporadically over the years, but the handwritten score of Bosmans' first cello concerto, the Concerto in D (1921), which was only her second orchestral

composition, had never been published or edited properly. I thought it might be the ugly duckling, so to speak. In fact, it turned out to be extraordinary and full of many colours. Written for a huge orchestra, with harps, celeste and a large percussion section, it's a very long piece, full of invention and unique details. Her composition tutor, Willem Pijper, thought it was too effusive, and the piece had been forgotten about, but in retrospect it's full of surprises.

As Ed noted, we had to make changes to the scores as we went along. With the *Poème*, for example, it soon became clear that the huge chords in the brass were obscuring the string section, but this was easily edited. Even though I've never composed, I have always enjoyed adapting music if I think it can be improved. When I'm playing the work of a living composer, I might ask if I can make a change, and nine times out of ten, they say yes, let's do that because it sounds better. If you spend your whole time with the cello, exploring sonorities, sounds, and places on the instrument that sound good, and you come across something in a composition which isn't practical, you know that everyone in the future will resent the composer for writing it that way, so why not suggest something else? It's a very creative process.

Of course, Bosmans wasn't around for me to ask, but in quite a few passages of the first concerto, I decided something was impractical and wouldn't sound right, so I re-wrote it. These options will be published in the score as *Ossia*, or alternatives, as you see in the Dvorak Concerto or the Rococo variations.

It was a thrilling three days on many levels. I've played a huge amount of repertoire in my life, much of it with orchestras, and it's not unusual to encounter grumpiness if we're not playing a piece of well-known repertoire. In Glasgow, however, there wasn't that feeling at all, and the whole orchestra were really positive. Everyone had great things to play, and it all made sense musically. In fact, Ed told the orchestra that they should get a medal from the Dutch government because no Dutch orchestra had so far played as much music in three days by Bosmans in the past 80 years. "You in Scotland have the crown!" he said.

I'm in the process of recording the *Sonata* and *Trois Impressions* (the *Nocturne with Harp* is already in the can), so there will be a complete library of Bosmans' work. The scores will be published by Donemus, a publisher specializing in Dutch music, so I'm delighted that Bosmans' cello repertoire will finally be available for contemporary cellists. My students are aware of the importance of playing the less well-known repertoire, and it's very important to me that they know about Bosmans.

Donemus will also help to promote her work and be in touch with people who could produce it. It's such a challenge to extend the range of repertoire in concert halls in which just a tiny proportion of repertoire is regularly performed. My one hope is that I get to play Bosmans' music where it should be played, in Holland, with a really good Dutch orchestra so that it can be heard – and then bit by bit, I hope that orchestras will put it into their repertoire.'

Biography: *Henriëtte Bosmans was one of the most important Dutch composers of the first half of the 20th century. She was the only child of cellist Henri Bosmans, who died from TB a few months after her birth, and pianist Sarah Benedicts. Bosmans studied piano with her mother, who was a teacher at the Amsterdam Conservatory. Bosmans became a successful concert pianist, touring Europe and regularly performing at home with the Concertgebauw orchestra. She also studied music theory and composition with Jan Willem Kersbergen, and had composition lessons with her neighbour, Willem Pijper, who encouraged her to embrace a more contemporary style.*

From 1920–1927 she was the partner of cellist and conductor Frieda Belinfante, who inspired her early cello compositions and who went on to play a major role in the resistance movement in Nazi-occupied Holland. In 1934, Bosmans' fiancé, violinist Francis Koene, died of a brain tumour, and Bosmans composed no more music for the following nine years.

Bosmans' compositions were performed in Holland, Switzerland and the USA before WWII and the Nazi invasion of Holland. By 1942, Bosmans, as the daughter of a Jewish mother, was banned from public performances and relied on gifts of food from friends to support her and her aging mother. She also gave secret house concerts, known as 'Black Evenings', which were illegal at the time, once avoiding arrest by escaping through the back yard, while the audience were heavily fined. When her mother was arrested and taken to a transport camp in 1944, Bosmans risked going to Gestapo Headquarters to sue for her mother's release. After the war, Bosmans returned to composition, her first piece being for voice and orchestra and entitled 'Doodenmarsch' (Death March). She went on to write 25 songs for her close friend, mezzo soprano Noémie Perugia. She died in 1952.

Works for cello by Henriëtte Bosmans:

Sonata for cello and piano (1919)
Nocturne for cello and harp (1921)
Concerto in D for cello and orchestra (1922)
Poème for cello and orchestra (1923)
Concerto no. 2 for cello and orchestra (1923)
Trois Impressions for cello and keyboard: *Cortège; Nuit calme; En Espagne*

Further information about Bosmans:
https://www.forbiddenmusicregained.org/search/composer/id/100018

Extraordinary documentary about Frieda Belinfante:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zpkNLqpoty4

CELLOS & BOWS FOR SALE

WILLIAM FORSTER CELLO c.1770

L.O.B: 29¼" (738mm) String length: 26⅜" (670mm)

£tbc

An elegant cello by William Forster with an expansive, rewarding tone and very good projection. Fully restored in our workshop. Labelled internally. Beare receipt.

B. S. FENDT II CELLO 1832

L.O.B: 29½" (754mm) String length: 27" (685mm)

£85,000

This beautiful cello is a joy to play, with a quick, generous response and a rich, beautifully textured and well-projecting tone and it has been well cared for through its life.

JAMES W. BRIGGS CELLO 1899

L.O.B: 29¾" (755mm) String length: 27⅛" (689mm)

£45,000

This immaculate, rich and rewarding cello was the first instrument of a fine professional player and features in *Violin Making in Scotland 1750–1950* by D. Rattray.

JOHN MORRISON CELLO c.1820

L.O.B: 29⅛" (740mm) String length: 26½" (675mm)

£39,500

A late cello by John Morrison in excellent condition, with refined arching and translucent red-gold varnish. The bass is rich, the treble clear and effortless.

AITCHISON GUADAGNINI 2008

L.O.B: 28⅛" (715mm) String length: 26¼" (668mm)

£32,000

A faithful copy of an exceptionally beautiful Milan period Guadagnini cello, with rich, complex tonal qualities, powerful projection and a quick response.

CELLO LABELLED PRESTON c.1790

L.O.B: 29" (742mm) String length: 27" (684mm)

£25,000

A handsome English cello of great character, with a refined, smooth and colourful tone. The varnish is a beautiful deep orange-brown.

Please see our website for cello recordings and photographs.

CELLO BOWS FOR SALE			
Dodd bow, Tubbs frog	92.9	S	£10,000
W. E. Hill & Sons (Yeoman)	78.6	S	£8,000
David Samuels	80.9	S	£8,000
W.E.H.&S. (Leeson/Bishop)	76.5	S	£6,000
Steve Salchow	82.6	S	£5,850
Roger Zabinski	83.6	S	£5,650
W.E.H.&S. (Hill)	81.9	S	£5,500
Christophe Schaefer	80.2	S	£5,500
J.S. Finkel	82.3	G	£5,250
William Watson	83.5	G	£5,000
Mark Yakoushkin	85.0	S	£4,500
Eric Lane	82.0	S	£4,470
John Aniano	85.0	S	£4,470
John Aniano	81.9	S	£4,470
Bernd Etzler	83.0	S	£4,000
Robert Pierce	81.2	S	£3,910
Mark Drehmann	82.0	S	£3,660
Josef Gabriel	80.4	S	£3,300
Bernd Etzler	81.2	S	£3,200
Didier Claudel	82.5	S	£3,000
Andrew McGill	83.7	S	£2,950
David Tempest	82.6	S	£2,950
Siqueira	81.0	S	£1,475
M. Francisco	81.9	S	£1,475
J. R. Silva	81.9	S	£1,375
M. Francisco	81.5	S	£1,375
Jackson Fornaciari	82.6	S	£1,375
Juliano Oliveira	81.3	N	£1,075
S. Trindade	79.6	N	£1,075
Luan Ruy	81.1	N	£1,075