Kian Soltani

DVOŘÁK: CELLO CONCERTO

Silent Woods • Songs My Mother Taught Me • Lasst mich allein • Goin’ Home

Staatskapelle Berlin • Daniel Barenboim
CELLO CONCERTO

ARRANGEMENTS
FOR SOLO CELLO AND CELLO ENSEMBLE

Kian Soltani
Staatskapelle Berlin
Daniel Barenboim
ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK 1841–1904

**Concerto for Cello and Orchestra in B minor** op. 104 (B 191)

Konzert für Violoncello und Orchester h-Moll

1. Allegro 15:49
2. Adagio ma non troppo 12:06
3. Finale. Allegro moderato 13:10

Kian Soltani cello
Staatskapelle Berlin
Daniel Barenboim conductor

Live recording

- **Lasst mich allein** No. 1 from 4 Lieder op. 82 (B 157) 4:25
  Leave me alone
  *Arrangement for Solo Cello and Cello Ensemble: Kian Soltani*
  *Andante*

- **Goin’ Home** after the Largo from Symphony No. 9 in E minor 5:31
  “From the New World” op. 95 (B 178)
  *Arrangement for Solo Cello and Cello Ensemble: Stephan Koncz*

- **Songs My Mother Taught Me** 2:32
  No. 4 from Gypsy Melodies op. 55 (B 104)
  Als die alte Mutter mich noch lehrte singen
  *Arrangement for Solo Cello and Cello Ensemble: Kian Soltani*
  *Andante con moto*

- **Allegro moderato** No. 1 from 4 Romantic Pieces op. 75 (B 150) 2:56
  *Arrangement for Solo Cello and Cello Ensemble: Kian Soltani*

- **Silent Woods** No. 5 from From the Bohemian Forest op. 68 (B 133) 5:59
  Waldesruhe
  *Arrangement for Solo Cello and Cello Ensemble: Lothar Niefind & Gunter Ribke*
  *Lento e molto cantabile*

Kian Soltani solo cello

Cellists of the Staatskapelle Berlin

Alexander Kovalev
Nikolaus Popa
Isa von Wedemeyer
Claire Sojung Henkel
Johanna Helm
Teresa Beldi
Otto Tolonen double bass
INSATIABLE CREATIVITY – DVOŘÁK’S CELLO CONCERTO

by Kian Soltani

It is hard to think of an instrumental concerto so inextricably linked to a particular instrument as Antonín Dvořák’s Concerto for Cello and Orchestra.

The piece has long been a companion of mine, accompanying me through many of the highs and lows in my life, even though I took it into my repertory at a relatively late date in my career. I felt such a tremendous respect for this monumental work that I steered clear of it until I was nineteen. Only then did I feel that both musically and technically I was equal to Dvořák’s demands.

It seems almost a stroke of fate that ever since I first started to work on the piece Daniel Barenboim has been involved. My first project with Maestro Barenboim was in January 2014, when I was principal cellist with the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra – we had a week of rehearsals in Spain followed by a tour. I have to admit that initially I had no wish to take part in the project since I was due to play the Dvořák Concerto for the first time with an orchestra only three days after the tour was due to end and I wanted to devote myself uninterruptedly to the piece during the weeks leading up to the performance.

But Barenboim refused to accept this as an excuse: “Join us on our tour, Kian,” he said, “and I promise to work with you in detail on the Dvořák Cello Concerto.” Needless to add, this was an offer that I was unable to refuse.

Daniel Barenboim was true to his word and on every other evening, following the orchestral rehearsals, he spent hours working on the Concerto with me, exploring it in every last detail. He even asked his assistant to play the orchestral part on the piano. It was an unforgettable experience for me and, when I played the piece for the first time after the tour, it became clear to me at once that this Concerto will accompany me throughout the rest of my life.

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It is all the more significant, then, that many years later I have had the privilege of recording this piece with the same conductor, who from the outset has influenced my whole approach to it.

The Concerto itself has a tragic side to it: Dvořák wrote it during his time in America, and its second and third movements in particular have a sense of yearning about them that could perhaps be interpreted as homesickness. Be that as it may, Dvořák was working on the Adagio when he learnt that the secret love of his life, his sister-in-law Josefína Kaunitzová, was gravely ill. Of all Dvořák’s songs, her favourite was “Lasst mich allein” (Leave me alone) from his Four Lieder op. 82 – all were settings of German poems. He quotes it in the middle section of the Concerto’s slow second movement. When Josefina died in May 1895 – Dvořák had just returned home from New York with the completed score – he was so affected that he reworked the end of the final movement, too: it is no virtuosic coda that brings the work to an end but a Requiem for his deceased beloved in which the solo violin once again quotes the song. Dvořák himself described this passage as follows in a letter to his publisher: “The finale closes gradually diminuendo like a sigh – with reminiscences from the first and second movements – the solo dies down to pp and then swells again, and the last bars are taken up by the orchestra before it finishes in stormy mood. Such was my idea and from it I cannot depart.”
The Cello Concerto’s three movements are all very different in terms of their underlying character, while none the less coming together effortlessly to create the impression of a single great unity.

The opening movement is permeated by a feeling of “heroism”. Indeed, the cello’s entry after the lengthy orchestral introduction is almost like the entry of a hero and, as such, is comparable to the first entry of the soloist in Strauss’s *Don Quixote*, although here the character features in a parallel universe in which Don Quixote would indeed have been a radiant hero. The introduction to Dvořák’s Concerto is the very opposite of the one found in Strauss’s composition, turning it into an “Anti-Don Quixote”. Strauss begins in a serenely cheerful major tonality before gradually darkening the tone until the hero finally enters with the same motif in a dramatic minor key. Dvořák does the exact opposite. The clarinet introduces the opening movement’s main motif, which is effectively a leitmotif for the entire Concerto, in a sombre B minor, but the mood then gradually brightens before the orchestra provides a carpet of sound that gives the “hero” the space he needs to present the theme – marked “Quasi improvisando” – in a dazzling B major.

The second movement begins with a simple, idyllic theme, but after a few minutes this idyll is abruptly disturbed as if fate were knocking at the door. An outburst in the full orchestra ushers in a slightly modified version of the “Lasst mich allein” quotation, which the cello now states *molto espressivo*.

The third movement is markedly folklike in character, with memories and homesickness appearing as constant companions. Here Dvořák’s wealth of new melodies and his insatiable creativity really come into their own.
The fact that this is a live recording was both a great challenge and, at the same time, hugely liberating. The energy and spontaneity of a live concert before a packed house are hard to recreate in the studio, giving the present recording a certain sense of urgency. There was a special spirit in the air on that evening in the Berlin Philharmonie, and I very much hope that this can also be heard in this recording.

I have always had a great affection for cello ensembles – few other groups of identical instruments are as well suited to ensemble playing as the cello, since every register can be used from bass to soprano. As a result I was delighted to be able to prepare cello arrangements of a number of other works by Dvořák, which we recorded with the Staatskapelle’s cellists at the Siemens Villa in Berlin.

“Leave me alone” was an obvious choice since this song plays such an important role in Dvořák’s Cello Concerto. The slow movement from the Ninth Symphony (“From the New World”), which was later arranged as the song “Goin’ Home”, likewise has a connection with the Concerto since it, too, was written during its composer’s years in America. I asked Stephan Koncz, whose compositions and arrangements I have always admired, to prepare a cello version of it for me.

The remaining three pieces are all wonderful miniatures that bring this album to a gentle conclusion, while once again revealing Dvořák’s fertile imagination as a composer.

Translation: texthouse

Umso bedeutsamer ist es, dass ich nun, Jahre später, eben dieses Stück mit eben diesem Dirigenten, der von Anfang an meinen Zugang dazu geprägt hat, aufnehmen durfte.

Die drei Sätze des Cellokonzerts haben jeweils sehr unterschiedliche Grundcharaktere und fügen sich dennoch mühelos zu einem großen Ganzen.


Der dritte Satz hat stark folkloristische Elemente: Erinnerungen und Heimweh sind ständige Begleiter. Hier kommen Dvořáks Reichtum an neuen Melodien und seine unersättliche Kreativität besonders zur Geltung.

Der Umstand, dass dies eine Live-Aufnahme ist, war einerseits eine große Herausforderung, andererseits aber auch sehr befreiend. Die Energie und Spontaneität eines Live-Konzerts vor vollem Haus ist im Studio schwer zu imitieren und verleiht dieser Aufnahme einen gewissen »sense of urgency«. An jenem Abend lag in der Berliner Philharmonie ein besonderer Geist in der Luft, und ich hoffe sehr, dass das auch auf der Aufnahme zu hören ist!

Ich hatte immer schon eine große Vorliebe für Celloensembles – wohl kaum eine Besetzung mit gleichen Instrumenten eignet sich so gut für das Ensemblespiel wie die mit Cello, da alle Register vom Bass bis zum Sopran bedient werden können –, und so war es mir eine Freude, weitere Stücke von Dvořák zu arrangieren, die wir dann gemeinsam mit den Cellisten der Staatskapelle in der Siemens-Villa in Berlin aufgenommen haben.


Die restlichen drei Stücke sind wunderbare Miniaturen, die das Album sanft abrunden und abermals Dvořáks reiche kompositorische Fantasie aufscheinen lassen.
The Staatskapelle Berlin can look back on 450 years of existence, making it one of the most venerable orchestras worldwide. Since its first mention as the Kurbrandenburgische Hofkapelle (Brandenburg Court Orchestra) in 1570, the ensemble, with its cosmopolitan national and international charisma, has been closely connected to Berlin’s cultural life.

With the opening of the Unter den Linden opera house in 1742, the Königlich Preußische Hofkapelle (Royal Prussian Court Orchestra), as it was then named, found a permanent home. There it has continually featured in numerous opera and ballet performances as well as, since 1842, a regular series of symphony concerts. Significant musical personalities through the ages ensured that the Staatsoper Unter den Linden and the Staatskapelle Berlin developed into major players in the music world: with Gaspare Spontini, Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, Felix von Weingartner, Richard Strauss, Wilhelm Furtwängler, Erich Kleiber, Otto Klemperer, Herbert von Karajan, Franz Konwitschny and Otmar Suitner, leading conductors of their time worked at the opera house and with the orchestra.

Daniel Barenboim has been General Music Director of the Staatskapelle Berlin since 1992, and he was elected Conductor for Life by the orchestra in 2000. The outstanding artistic achievements and growing prestige in both the opera and concert sector, attested to by numerous international guest performances and a broad media presence, make the Staatsoper Unter den Linden and the Staatskapelle Berlin key cultural institutions today. With their return in 2017 to the fully renovated, modernized opera house, which now boasts noticeably improved acoustics and expanded technical facilities, the Staatsoper and Staatskapelle have once again found their traditional place in the historic centre of Berlin.

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